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ABSTRACT

The Annenberg Rural Challenge seeks to create an effective and sustainable rural school movement that actively involves families, communities, and educators in supporting good rural schools in reciprocal relationships with their communities and local environments. Twenty-six projects, involving hundreds of schools and communities, have been funded. This report focuses on observed "community-school exchange" at Rural Challenge sites while providing insight into the underlying goal of community-school integration through a "pedagogy of place." The following conclusions are drawn: schools most often initiate the exchange; there are mutually beneficial interactions between community and schools; younger and older people become collective resources to local communities; negative (school-community) histories create challenges to exchange; learning to interact is an educational process; diversity can be an asset; competing cultural views need greater recognition; and standards and tests need careful consideration. Appendixes include the views of the Annenberg Rural Challenge leadership; an evaluator's thoughts and observations on the Rural Challenge; background and context of the research and evaluation project; defining community and school exchange; and survey responses from students, teachers, and parents at seven evaluation sites. (SAS)

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Annenberg Rural Challenge Research & Evaluation Team Annual Report 1997

- **Learning From Rural Communities: Alaska to Alabama**

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Annenberg Rural Challenge Research & Evaluation Team Annual Report 1997

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Communities and Schools: Weaving Their Stories Together

Annual Report of the Rural Challenge Research & Evaluation Team

Introduction
Communities and Schools Exchange: Beginning the Conversation

At first, community members were concerned seeing so many children in the streets, drawing pictures of buildings and trees, being in the fields, filling containers with water from the pond. A common question was, "Shouldn't they be in the school building?" But as they talked with the children about what they were doing and began answering questions about their lives, everything changed. Community members began suggesting to the children and their teachers other possibilities for community-based activities, even initiating learning opportunities.

One woman thought the children passing her house each day might be interested in learning about the 100-year-old cherry tree she and her husband were forced to cut down. The children and their teacher were invited to her house to view pictures of the tree at various historical points as well as the day it was cut down. The woman then gave the children a tour of the house, pointing out the floor of the foyer, a double headboard, a decorous shelf, one wall of the living room, a twelve-drawer dresser and a plant stand, all made from the cherry tree.
Selborne Project, Russell, Pennsylvania

It is in the weaving together of stories like the one above that communities and schools begin their exchange. We have chosen to focus our attention in this report on *community-school exchange*, principally as this has become over the year the central focus of the Rural Challenge.[1] This focus was not so clear one year ago as the Rural Challenge grant-making process was initiated. While "a pedagogy of place" was a principal tenet of the Rural Challenge, it was not a clearly understood conception in the various Rural Challenge sites. By giving our attention to community-school exchange, it seems that we can help clarify the potential of this idea, mostly through sharing work in various Rural Challenge sites that contributes to its successful embodiment in practice.

It should be acknowledged at the outset that our original Research and Evaluation design uses the formulation *community-school integration* rather than

[1] What was initially thought about as a school reform movement with a local emphasis has become a fuller community revitalization/sustainability movement. Appendix A outlines the way the current leadership of the Rural Challenge speaks about the work. Appendix B provides a more detailed account of the history of the Rural Challenge and its development. Appendix C is a short description of our Research and Evaluation design, a guide to the way we have gone about our work.

community-school exchange. Given this first year, however, when most Rural Challenge sites are at the level of *exchange* and not *integration*, it seemed appropriate to use the term exchange. We will, however, provide in this report ideas about what *community-school integration* might be "at its best," with the understanding that this will extend additional possibilities to consider.

As additional context -- essentially a rationale for the focus of this report -- we should note that the earliest questions we received from the various sites was about student work in relation to communities. Moreover, at the Rural Challenge Rendezvous in June 1997, that "coming together" of participants from all Rural Challenge communities, community-school exchanges were the primary interest.

The gallery displays at the Rendezvous, representations from each Rural Challenge site, were almost exclusively accounts of community-school connections. The displays were mostly the products of student work in communities and cross-generational exchanges around various community-based resources -- rivers, greenhouses, historical societies, governmental agencies, health centers, businesses and museums among others. These displays proved especially generative as participants learned much from one another, seeing in the work of others more possibilities for themselves. They noted, in particular, high quality "genuine work."

They also had numerous questions about how to move toward the fuller community-school integration the Rural Challenge is emphasizing. For most, there was little difficulty in seeing the potential of six or eight week units related to the local community. Such directions had a history within most schools. Contemplating a fully integrated community in which schools are *one* of many centers for education was, however, more difficult to imagine.[2] It is the vision of a fuller integration of community and school that seems in need of greater clarity.

There is certainly an understanding that getting students into communities, making connections to local resources, finding ways of involving more adults in the community as mentors and teachers is a constructive and important direction. How to get there is for most Rural Challenge participants the real question. The barriers -- long-standing expectations, regulations, time, various state curriculum standards and tests, and divergent community beliefs -- were described by many people at the Rendezvous as large. The roadmap to the fuller integration that the Rural Challenge has made so central is not yet in place. We envision this report to be an important part of the roadmap, an account that traces the work of many

[2] Clearly, various 6-8 week projects **have** had the effect of bringing greater energy to the schools and they are attracting interest in local communities. Students are enthusiastic about their local studies and the quality of student work in relation to the projects appears to be high. These local curricular entries have also given many schools and their teachers a larger sense of purpose, helping them understand that their work has great import. Moreover, in many settings, the six week unit of a sixth grade teacher around aspects of the local community has been the impetus for the seventh grade teacher to organize a six week unit centered on what is local. A high school science teacher's collaboration with the Bureau of Land Management has stimulated the history teacher to build a connection with the County Historical Association. An entrepreneurial effort in social studies class has encouraged a literature teacher to pursue a publishing activity with the community. The visit to a school by a local artist has stimulated visits from other community members. These are clearly constructive efforts, good beginnings.

communities as well as suggesting some next steps.

In consonance with our Research and Evaluation design, our efforts over the year, beyond the starting-up tasks of getting the work underway, have emphasized the collection of stories relating to the large Rural Challenge goals. We have chosen to organize around stories as they reflect well critical aspects of life in rural communities. In *Schooling in Isolated Communities* (1978), Tom Gjelten notes the importance of telling stories "because the...school and community are so small, it can be seen as a whole rather than in parts. We do not lose sight of that large picture: the experiences of the people...It is important to see this whole scene because one of the most characteristic features of the rural experience is the interconnectedness throughout it...[an] integration of personal, cultural, professional and social dimensions." Stories are naturally more integrative, more informing.

In keeping with such a view, this report will include an array of community-school exchange stories, mostly in narrative form but also through photographs. It should be noted, however, that the stories we tell are meant to exemplify a theme or large idea and not to suggest that this is all there is. We have, in fact, many more stories than we can share easily within the overall purposes of this report. We have not, therefore, made an effort to represent every Rural Challenge site. Balancing out the stories will be our aim in future reports.

As a way to help set the stage for the discussion that follows, we present some thoughts about the relationships of communities and schools.

To think about communities and schools at their best, in integrated terms, in reciprocal relationships, is to consider a reinvention of schools as well as a different view of communities. We may never reach a community-school integration in its ideal form, but moving **toward** the ideal is to move in the direction of a better education for children and young people, a larger purpose for teachers as they consider matters of curriculum and their roles in the creation of the common good, that sense of commonwealth, and a healthier level of exchange in communities, a moving beyond separateness and individualistic motivations to a condition in which every person, every family understands they have an important contribution to make to the larger common good. This, it seems to us, is an important base for the work of the Rural Challenge.

The remaining text of this report presents what we have learned in relation to community-school exchange by examining the historical and political context of community-school exchange; current activities in ARC communities and their schools; and a set of tentative conclusions and implications.

The Historical & Political Context of Community-School Exchange

The reason I am up here [making this presentation] is that I have discovered something about the Rural Challenge, [and] also about rural as a quality, as something that is appreciated in the aesthetic sense. The word rural has the connotation of having to do with America's past...bringing an archaic image to mind. We conjure this few-toothed farmer with a piece of straw in his mouth, hoeing his crop with a red barn in the background...[This is not the view] we must embrace. The purpose of this [Rendezvous]...is to enhance the identities of the rural communities and their people. That brings me to my discovery...people are here for the specific [sense of rural], the one that is detailed. We are here to celebrate and encourage our own different forms of reality...we are trying to keep from being swindled into believing that urbanity is the world, that it is all that matters...We are saving ourselves from being sucked up into the black hole that is lost identity, the belief in our uselessness. We are attempting to defy what...[has] seemed an eventual certainty...it is not through the use of the word rural that we will succeed, but through our individual identities...We must cry out in our separate voices, "We are Mexicans, We are Alaskans, We are Texans, We are Californians!" The cries of all of us will unite to tell the world, "We are important! We are self-sufficient! We are our own people! We are rural!"

Devin Smither, age 16 Edcouch, Texas

Earlier, near the turn of the century schools were more closely tied to their communities. What was local mattered. It was the natural starting point for schools and the context around which community people could mobilize their efforts. The social, economic, and cultural centralization that we have come to know had not yet taken firm hold. While industrialization was rapidly taking place and urban growth was proceeding at unimagined rates, rural communities were holding their own, especially in the upper Midwest and Plains states.

By the beginnings of the Great War (World War I), rural schools and communities were on the defensive, increasingly described as inefficient, encumbered by "too much localism." For example, Ellwood Cubberly, one of the leading educators of his day, wrote, in 1914, that rural schools were "in a state of arrested development, burdened by educational traditions, lacking in effective supervision, controlled largely by rural people, who too often do not realize either their own needs or the possibilities of rural education."[3] Following such a lead, state Departments of

[3] Cubberly, Ellwood, *Rural Life and Education: A Study of the Rural School Problem as a Part of the Rural Life Problem*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1914), pp. 5-6.

Education almost everywhere took up the "problem" of rural schools, asserting greater and greater control.

Those who saw rural schools as a serious problem believed that the way out from under their "primitive" nature was to encourage consolidation. These larger consolidated schools would be placed under closer supervision by the State and become more infused with a standard curricular orientation. As a result, schools became distant, influenced less and less by local cultural values and concerns. This movement generated considerable friction since it became easy for someone sitting many miles away to believe that a particular activity was marginal and should be eliminated while local people might very well see that same activity as central.

The loss of their schools through consolidation has been devastating to many communities. While not the single factor that has caused many communities to collapse socially and economically, it was often a major contributor. Consolidation has come to mean long bus rides for many students. In the winter months, students leave home when it is dark and get home when it is dark. Particularly troubling was the fact that a central venue for community activities ceased to function.

The consolidation movement has taken a large toll. In 1920, there were still some 200,000 school districts in the United States, most of which were small. By 1940, the number had shrunk to 140,000. In 1997, there are fewer than 15,000. Moreover, in many settings, the pressure for further consolidation remains large.[4] One has only to think about the difference in citizen participation in the affairs of schools to understand the impact. In 1920, there were some 1.4 million school board members; in 1997, there are approximately 80,000.

One of the principal criticisms of the growing centralization and greater bureaucratization of schools early in the century was that the gap between those controlling schools and the students, their families and local communities was growing out of control. The gap is considerably larger today.

In offering this discussion about shifting conditions for rural schools and communities, it needs to be acknowledged that many genuine concerns exist. Throughout much of the twentieth century, rural areas have undergone considerable loss of population, a factor that has placed added pressure on rural communities. This was due not only to agricultural changes but to industrialization and centralization of opportunity. With the overall decline in rural population, slumping student enrollments and a more limited tax base, pressures to merge schools and consolidate governmental services have grown considerably. Communities that are in a state of decline have been historically vulnerable. Minor County in South Dakota is not unusual in regard to population decline. In 1960, there were 22,000 people and 44 schools. Today, there are 2,700 people and one

[4] County districts now prevail across the Southern states. In the upper Midwest and the Plains, pressures on small schools are becoming larger around various definitions of efficiency – none of which support small size and limited course offerings.

school. In West Virginia, many counties that once had 100-200 schools now have from 5-10. In almost half of the West Virginia counties, there is now only one high school.

Further, demographic trends are not particularly uplifting. The proportion of the population living in rural areas is declining. Moreover, the older segment of the population (those over 65) has increased significantly in rural areas while the proportion of those of working age is much higher in metropolitan areas. North Dakota has, for example, had 13 consecutive years in which the number of births has declined. This is not an unusual pattern in many of the Plains states.

In terms of economics, median family income in rural areas is only 3/4 of that in metropolitan areas. Poverty rates in rural areas are also greater than in metropolitan areas. Because of poverty and isolation, small schools in rural communities have long been viewed by those in various state governments and policy circles as severely limited academically.

In contrast to the popular view of rural schools as too small, not offering enough courses, providing a "limited education," those who live in these rural communities, taking a local view, have maintained more positive views of the schools. They are generally not convinced that larger is better. They value the small size for its social benefits, the opportunities for all students to participate in activities -- clubs, sports, music, drama. And they are more positive about the schools academically than their urban counterparts. They are also learning that moving to a larger scale has not resulted in increased student performance academically.

Sustaining/Developing Productive Community-School Relationships

> *Small communities are particularly well suited to incorporating the school and the work of the school within the work and values of the community. There are rural schools which are not thought of as being separate from the community but an integral part of it, sometimes the center of the community in important ways. Ideally it's difficult to see the boundaries between the school and the community when people of all ages are moving regularly between the systems of both.*
>
> *Scott Christian Alaska*

The Rural Challenge is committed to altering many of the conditions that work against rural schools and communities. It began with the premise that revitalization and sustainability are possible, that there are values associated with rural schools and communities that need to be preserved, that the small size is

actually a strength. It is important to acknowledge, however, that the challenges to this large set of hopes are formidable.

How do schools and their communities interact?
How do communities and schools share resources?
How do communities support the schooling process?
How do schools support the development of communities?

These are important questions for all communities, especially rural communities that are often small, share limited resources, and are full of a history and tradition of struggle. What is clear is that as communities and schools interact, they often bring differing agendas.

The remainder of this report focuses on telling the stories of Rural Challenge sites. The stories seem to connect to a deeper aspect of rural life, the traditions of a rich relationship with the land, a capacity to develop and make use of diverse talents in small communities, and an ability to understand education as a shared responsibility.

ARC Communities and their Schools: Understanding the Language

> *I value the land, the sacred ceremonies, the space for children to play, the beauty of the people who call this home. Teacher, Lac Courte Oreilles (Wisconsin)*

How do communities and schools in the Rural Challenge interact? How are they working through various economic, social, cultural, linguistic and political matters?

One view is typified by a teacher from the Laguna Middle School in Arizona who shared with us what he thought community-school exchange meant:

> *The ideal, whether rural, urban, tribal, or whatever, is for the school to be fully integrated into the community. What does that mean? For me it means:*
> - *The school's curriculum includes site-specific teaching and learning;*
> - *The community has input into the decision-making of the school;*
> - *The community determines what is taught at the school based on local needs;*
> - *Parental involvement is high;*
> - *Communication between home, school, and community is frequent,*

and takes a variety of forms (newsletters, open houses, phone calls, letters, etc.);
- *Community members work at the school as staff an volunteers;*
- *The school building gets used by the community for more than just its educational mission--i.e. meetings, sports programs, etc.*

While many schools and their communities are working toward this ideal, there is clearly no one best way to foster this level of integration. Moreover, there are complexities that need to be thought about and worked through. We note below *some* conventional understandings/definitions that make the exchange difficult.

Schools are often conceived as places in which teachers and children interact with a set of procedures and rules that tell them how to work together. Unless they are parents of students in the school, members of the community may remain relatively unaware of what occurs there. The teachers, along with the parents of school-age children are the most apparent links to the community.

A community is often seen as a distinct group of people who focus more often on the economic and personal needs of the adults than on the academic, social or emotional needs of children.

Schooling tends to be understood as what goes on in the school building, not what goes on when teachers and students leave the building to learn from or about the environment that surrounds them.

We heard these various complexities played out in some of the ways we outline below.

The school has its property, its materials, and its boundaries that are controlled by both state and local funds and mandates that guide the educational process; members of the community have opinions about their schools and " how they are doing," but often community people do not have a major voice in determining what happens in the schooling process; some active community members may be school board members, but again there are limits to the voice of community members in determining educational policy and practice.

Schools and communities have traditional boundaries between them. Many Rural Challenge sites represent very different views of what community means[5] and what school means. In this regard, the consolidations that exist create complexities. Often these divergent views project an *us* vs. *them* stance. Adults in the community often view themselves as the keepers of the place and don't necessarily agree with those who work in the schools, in many settings persons who live

[5] Appendix D provides a set of working definitions for community, schooling and student learning in the context of schooling.

outside the setting with only limited local investment.[6] The school and its professional staff often see themselves as agents of a socialization and educational process, believing they know best what children need to know/understand. Even the language between these two groups can be different -- a school-centric versus a community-sustaining language.

Many Rural Challenge Rendezvous participants noted that community-school exchange -- and the changes that came with it -- often raised issues of perception, or misperception. Envisioning young people as community members and as resources, for example, is not always easy to understand. One person from a PACERS site in Alabama commented that the students do not understand the need to give back to the community because they do not understand that they have received much from the community. Others suggested that students had not been traditionally thought of as active citizens in their communities.

A key element of this lack of understanding, and a major challenge to school-community exchange relates to the direction of the relationship. Is it, for example, one way or two ways? How much reciprocity exists? As it stands, much that currently exists is directed mostly by the schools.

When schools and communities work together on projects, a beginning step in a process of mutual exchange has begun. The project becomes an entry point for school and community people to interact on behalf of children and their learning. Most schools use the community as a study area. Community members, however, are not central to the planning of the projects, but instead school people bring the projects to them. Simply put, projects are initiated by schools most often to use community resources, and the project is directed by teachers as part of a defined educational objective.

One factor that gives everyone considerable hopefulness about constructive possibilities is that schools are, on the whole, highly regarded by their communities. Frequently, in small rural communities, the school is the largest and most central facility in the town. It has a place of prominence in the eyes of the people since many generations of a family attended the same school. Nonetheless, as it was stressed at the Rendezvous, schools need the creativity of community members to make exchanges something larger, more sustaining. The following exchange exemplifies this point.

At Falconer, New York, a Selborne site, for example, the town librarian, now seeing more parent and child interest in local history, got resources to get historical photographs reprinted in "siena shades" so they looked more like old photographs. The librarian now uses the photographs to show local children what was happening

[6] We found more stability among teaching staffs in Rural Challenge sites than we had originally anticipated. Some of the Native American communities are still experiencing turnover among non-native teachers and in areas that have become popular as resort centers or refuges from nearby urban areas, teachers have been economically forced to live outside the community of the school.

at different times in Falconer -- the circus coming to town, the arrival of the railroad, the first house, the construction of the school. This "historical preservation" work is adding to the school's work.

Themes Related to Community-School Exchange

The most important thing we are trying to do is make the school into the community center. We think the school should be open 7 days a week, and that the resources in the school should be available to everyone, like the computers, the internet. We let all kinds of organizations use the community meeting room for their committee meetings, and we also use the room to facilitate community conversations about the direction of the school.
Jim Lentz, Principal, Howard High School (South Dakota)

ARC sites are currently interacting at many different levels, with some community-school exchanges more fully developed than others. Previous funding for and experience with community-school exchange helped some sites enter into conversations with collections of community members, parents, teachers and children at an earlier point. Many, in fact, have been at this work for many years as is the case in Alaska, South Dakota, Nebraska and several Texas Interfaith communities. Most, however, are in the beginning stages of their school-community exchange.

An important thread within all the themes is the understanding that children's educational experiences are enlarged greatly as communities and schools come together around a spectrum of voices related to race and culture, intergenerational exchange, students themselves, business/entrepreneurial support and the land.

The table below represents an initial display of community-school exchange themes growing from observations, interviews, surveys and portfolios collected by the Research and Evaluation Team over the past six months. We present below examples of how these themes play out in practice in a collection of sites in the Annenberg Rural Challenge.[7]

[7] The photographs which appear come exclusively from our initial eight focus sites -- The Appalachian Rural Education Network (Kentucky/Virginia), School at the Center (Nebraska), Texas Interfaith, Selborne (New York/Pennsylvania), PACERS Small School Cooperative (Alabama), Tillamook Education Consortium (Oregon), The Program for Rural School and Community Renewal (South Dakota) and Integrating Indigenous Knowledge into Educational Systems (Alaska).

Emerging Themes of Community School Exchange

1. Community-school exchange results in mutual benefits.

2. Community-school exchange is diverse, complex, and related to a wide range of economic, cultural and historic resources.

3. Community-school exchange means acknowledging underlying cultural views.

4. Community-school exchange makes use of collective talents.

5. Community-school exchange involves multiple entry points.

6. Community-school exchange is sometimes new territory

1. Community-school exchange results in mutual benefits.

We feel that our schools have helped to preserve the rural way of life...Our teachers have created paths between schools and communities. When paths are open, results can be incredible. Nancy Smith, Gaylesville School (Alabama)

Most often, the community and the school intersect in activities initiated either by the community or the school. The length of time people have intentionally engaged in this work often determines how much interaction occurs and how vital and sustaining the work becomes. Community-school integration, often develops through a series of projects that encourage mutually beneficial relationships.

The question of how community-school exchange works and what exactly is exchanged has interesting and varied answers within the various Rural Challenge sites. There are many instances in which the exchange began as a sharing of material goods, human resources, common space or mutually understood need. The story of the School at the Center project portrays one way in which mutual benefits grow from community-school exchange.

Nebraska: School at the Center

(Albion, Nebraska)

"Senior Paul Myers has the key to the Boone County Historical Society. His teacher, Ellen Kohtz writes "Paul was entrusted with the key to the Historical Society building because he knew this is work we can do and we will protect our community's heritage. Paul and fellow students started their efforts in the summer of 1996, meeting with local Society members" (From: Active Learner, Vol. 2, p. 13).

The Story of the School at the Center Project

The School at the Center project, which includes 14 schools across the state, asks community-school members to plan together and examine needs in the following five areas: (1) local housing or historic building reconstruction; (2) local environmental repair; (3) micro-enterprise development; (4) the exploration and continuation of the town's heritage in music, art, literature, history, oral history, and folklore; and (5) the creation of technological applications that join adult/child learning, community-school planning and local/regional pride. Related to the foregoing, there are three additional areas of concern: (1) sustainable agriculture; (2) wellness; and (3) conflict resolution.

Although the School at the Center project brings a common framework, each school and community develops projects based on local needs. Projects include building restoration, environmental studies, historical research and preservation, technology implementation, establishment of micro-enterprise, and community-based art in the Nebraska towns of Albion, Big Springs, Henderson, Maxwell, Palmer, Wakefield, and Wayne. Through a variety of community-school exchanges, different sites have found that pooling resources is mutually beneficial.

Jerry Hoffman, co-director of the project, sees the process of community-school exchange as central. As he says:

You know the institutions in these places are not separate -- church, family, business, school --all of these institutions are integrated in very real and visible ways. The minister may be the postman, the principal may be your Sunday School teacher, the custodian may be head of the local civic club. The school people and the community people are often living and working in both camps. There are simply more hats for each person to wear in a small town and that makes integration of the school in the community a more natural part of everyday life.

Another example of working together for common purposes is illustrated in the accounts from Washington County (Maine) and Mariposa (California).

In the Washington County Consortium, Shead High School in Eastport, Maine and SAD #19 middle school in Lubec, Maine are collaborating with one another and with their communities to develop marine science laboratories in the schools which will help the local fishermen. The science and math teachers at Shead High School, with the help of the Quebec Labrador Foundation and the University of Maine,

Nebraska: School at the Center

(Henderson, Nebraska)

Students in a "Sense of Place: A Sense of Self" study, headed by Marc Regier and Sharon Bishop, analyzed human and animal interaction on four environments: Sandhill crane sandbars in the Platte, local native grasslands' ecosystems, adjacent wetlands, and the deep well irrigation areas (From: Active Learner, Vol. 2, p. 12).

(Big Springs, Nebraska)

Robi Kroger and her students restored an old hotel as a bed- and-breakfast, getting advice from the state historical society. Now they are endeavoring, with the advice of hydrologists, to unplug the "big spring" that gave the town its name. In Silver Creek, a similar scientific water project is proceeding with the cleaning up of a local lake's water and its rebuilding as a recreation area. (From: The Active Learner, Vol. 2, p. 11).

have converted an abandoned trailer on the school grounds into a laboratory that will be a marine research and learning center. The students have learned architectural design, building skills, marketing research skills and are writing a guide book. Each student has produced extensive portfolios of his/her work which are accepted as meeting curricular requirements. The middle school students in Lubec are also renovating an abandoned building into an aquaculture research station. They intend to focus on salmon and halibut farming. The students have learned how to raise funds by writing and public speaking; they have also compiled a research library on laboratories, salmon and halibut species. Once the center is renovated, the students will be totally responsible for maintaining the tanks, the experiments and teaching what they are learning to children in the elementary school. Their research will also be useful to the fishermen of Lubec.

In Mariposa (California), Dave Lapic, a self-employed owner of a T-shirt business was approached by the school community as a potential business partner. He asked: "What's in it for me, for the business community, for community members? He has become a principal player in setting up "strategic alliances" between businessmen, students and researchers. For example, each summer the Yosemite Concession Service brings high school students to work at its stands in Yosemite National Park. The students earn some money while getting a chance to see and learn to appreciate Yosemite. There are also students now who come to Yosemite as part of a forestry research team each summer. Instead of just using students for flipping hamburgers, the U.S. Park Service decided to train them to work as researchers with them in the forest. Other similar relationships have developed between businesses and the schools creating a true reciprocity.

What is particularly interesting in these examples is that the initial openness to sharing developed into a stronger sense of reciprocity between communities and schools. The initial sharing created a clearer sense of common bond/goals and opened the way for more projects with an even greater sense of reciprocity.

2. Community-school exchange is diverse, complex and related to a wide range of economic, cultural and historical resources.

> *We don't want our best export to be our children.*
> *Collective statement, Mariposa (California)*

The stories of community-school exchange are as varied as the landscapes in which they are set. There seemed no single map for entering an exchange. If there was any common element, though, it seemed to come in the form of a basic question or problem that communities and schools could practically address together.

The Texas Interfaith organization with its emphasis on community activism especially illustrates this idea. Parents, as community activists, have helped school people see the value of engaging in community activities. In the process, schools have begun to appreciate the needs of the local communities in reclaiming their native language, culture or land.

Texas Industrial Areas Foundation & Valley Interfaith Alliance Schools

The story of the Valley Interfaith Alliance Schools (related to Texas Interfaith) is about a community, with the help of the church, that rallied to reclaim its schools. In the Rio Grande Valley in South Texas, Valley Interfaith Alliance schools comprise 42 religious congregations and 15 schools.

When Connie Mahaswari became principal of the Sam Houston Elementary School in McAllen, Texas in 1988, it was in critical condition: the physical structure was collapsing, the teachers were demoralized, and academic achievement was poor. The parishioners in McAllen, Texas, supported by Valley Interfaith, started holding house meetings with all the families in the school. Their mission was to form an accord with their community and their school in order to improve teacher-parent-student relationships.

Working closely with Valley Interfaith, Connie discovered that the major concern in the community was not internal to the school, but based in the neighborhoods. Many of the parents' homes were the most rudimentary shelters; back alleys taken by children on the way to school were filled with trash and paraphernalia left by drug users; several abandoned buildings violated code compliance laws and were used by drug dealers to ply their trade.

Parents and teachers in Connie's school learned how to discuss their problems, elect a spokesperson, reach consensus and speak publicly in defense of their concerns. They conducted neighborhood walks to bring public officials and school board members into the community to experience the problems for themselves. The parent organizing work was successful and the Department of Police, and the Department of Parks and Recreation responded to the problems. The school demonstrated its commitment to the parents by addressing their outside-of-school concerns.

A surprising twist to the story is that the superintendent decided to give the community a new high school building, not on the site of the old school, but several miles to the south. Alamo High School is not only newly constructed, it is fully supplied with computers and other state-of-the-art equipment. Many

people in the neighborhood are also moving into new homes in a recently redistricted community. The teachers have begun to develop innovative interdisciplinary curriculum units on housing and have involved the children in the new home construction in a variety of ways.

When the parents got more involved in improving the community, they also got more involved in the school and their children performed better in school. In fact, some Alliance schools are beginning to show an improvement in standardized test scores.

There are many other examples of communities going back into their own cultural roots to develop a new form of community-school exchange aimed at enlarging sustainability. Often, as well, the exchange is designed to bring a community together. The examples below from Elk City, Idaho and Marvell, Arkansas exemplify this point.

In Elk City (Idaho), a community of about 300 people, residents are preparing to build a timber frame structure that will serve as a community center. The community is currently fragmented with the loss of business in the logging and timber industry and dissension growing out of environmental debates and advocacy. There is also a strong fundamentalist Christian group that is home-schooling its children rather than using the local school. A number of people are hoping that by building this center together, it will bring the community together. A wilderness ranger who is a skilled craftsman is organizing the activity and has involved students in each part of the project. Students are working with architects and builders to learn how to draw up blueprints. They plan to use the community center for plays, meetings and dances.

The Marvell High School (Arkansas) is 86% African American; the majority of the white students attend a separate private school. The teaching staff is approximately half white and half African American. The school has a very close relationship with the community's religious institutions and a local community organization. The BGACDC (Boys, Girls, Adults Community Development Corp) serves hot lunches at school during the day, provides day care and runs a Dads' program which pairs adults with students who might be discipline problems. They also provide after-school tutoring. The BGACDC works alongside the local churches to help with the schools. According to Tommy Runnels, the principal of the school, "the separation between church and school doesn't happen in rural areas, in fact the church is the backbone of the community. Some of the churches provide tutoring in the school. One church provides a baccalaureate and one church provides scholarships. When we have a crisis, the ministers become counselors. Something else you probably wouldn't think of is that if there is a funeral in the community, our cafeteria facility is utilized for feeding family members. Also, our computer technology personnel have been called on to produce funeral programs."

3. Community and school exchange means acknowledging underlying cultural views.

For our high school projects we had to go out in the community and offer services and learn about our own cultural roots from people of all ages who had stories to teach us with. Matt Prichard, Student, St. Paul's High School (Virginia)

A story from the Appalachian Rural Renewal Project is a good example of how a school based project encouraged community-school exchange.

Appalachian Rural Education Network

The Appalachian Rural Education Network is a consortium of 15 schools located in the rural areas of Kentucky and Virginia. The network's purpose is to "create a process to catalyze rural school reform in the region" in order to "recreate viable, sustainable rural communities." Fostering and encouraging community-based curriculum, community stewardship, and systemic change are the major areas that the network focuses on in order to achieve its purposes and goals.

St. Paul High School, in Virginia, is representative, centering its goals around the following question: "How can we protect the heritage, stimulate the economy, and teach the young people to do the same so that they will have the desire and the opportunity to stay in St. Paul and with it prosper?" The school has worked to develop a curriculum that begins to grapple with that question and takes as its focus school/family/community partnerships.

As Matt Pritchard, a St. Paul high school student who participates in the media art project, says:
We are really trying to learn from all the people in our community by producing videos, with the help of community people and folks from Appleshop -- an arts-based initiative in Appalachia. Our videos are really popular here -- we feature local people sharing their experiences -- we did one on dreams and one on life in our town. Eventually our videos were aired locally -- imagine what our neighbors said the next day.

The school hopes to create an Appalachian Media Technology Program that would go hand-in-hand with their Math/Science goals as well as enhance the use of technology within other disciplines. The program's goals are to develop media services that would include television, yearbooks, audiotapes and newspapers that document community activities past and present.

The story of Battle Rock also typifies the use of the cultural and social resources of the community and school.

Sonja Horoshko lives in Battle Rock, Colorado and teaches art in one of the new charter schools. The K-6 school has 26 students and is located in McElmo Canyon near the four corners area of Colorado, Utah, New Mexico and Arizona. According to Sonja, most of the residents of the canyon are poor and working-class families. She describes the mix of people as, "a high concentration of highly educated professionals who work for Mobil oil, education professionals in the fields of archaeology and anthropology, a number of fundamentalist Christians, a large number of environmentalists and a number of Native American people."

A year ago, the school started a mentorship program which brought all these professionals, parents and Native Americans into the school to help the teachers develop a project around an archaeological expedition which came through McElmo Canyon in 1892. The children have studied what the early explorers studied -- geology, archaeology, and water. One of the expedition members was an artist who made drawings of what they were doing on the expedition. The children have researched this artist, located some of his drawings and paintings in Colorado, and have made their own paintings and drawings in the style of that painter. They have had a local art show of their work, and the students have supplied articles to the local newspaper about their research on the expedition.

4. Community-school exchange makes use of collective talents.

> *We believe in the Southern sense of the word "cooperative," which is a group of people banding together to acquire that which they need...there is a shared, very practical vision...and an organization of people banding together." Jon Chalmers, PACERS Small School Cooperative*

Community-school exchange often broadens the sources of education beyond the boundaries of the classroom or school building. There is an interest in making use of multiple resources. The Selborne Project, located in rural areas of New York and Pennsylvania, illustrates how a community-school exchange, initiated by the school, has the potential to help the school and the community realize the value of sharing resources and mining the talents of individuals of many ages.

Pennsylvania and New York: The Selborne Project

The small bandstand which sits in the heart of Falconer, NY is host to a series of summer concerts. On concert evenings, the lawn fills with families loaded down with folding chairs, blankets and suppers, ready to hear old favorites performed by a band from nearby Chautauqua.

Falconer Junior and Senior High School, in the background, fronts on to residential streets from which children can walk to school and parents can watch groups of "Selborne students" set out on their field trips through the community.

The struggling dairy farms that surround the village of Falconer hint at the economic precariousness of rural New York and Pennsylvania.

All of the above photographs were taken by Candace Cochrane, a Research Associate for the Annenberg Rural Challenge.

The Story of the Selborne Project

The Selborne Project was developed along the state border between Pennsylvania and New York state in order to restructure schools and create a stronger school and community relationship in towns facing economic difficulties. At least ten schools in this area currently have Selborne Projects underway, and as a result, schools are initiating important changes that are affecting both schools and communities.

The Selborne Project focuses on the study of "place" by creating a defined area around the school (one square kilometer) which becomes the source for student research and experientially-based learning projects. For four to eight weeks the students leave their classroom two to three days a week and fan out across their kilometer to learn the systems of nature and humans' interaction with them. The rest of the week, they process what they have found out in the field.

As a number of teachers suggested, this is not just a project for teachers and students. The community is very much involved. In the same way that students focus on the community in their study, community members see students as they gather data in the area, coming to consider ways they might make contributions to the work. As a result of the project, students have a new-found appreciation for their multi-faceted neighborhood, and the neighborhood has shown active interest in the students' learning and in the responsible role these young people can play in the future.

The story of the PACERS Small Schools Cooperative further illustrates the point of enlarging cultural connections and bringing together collective talents in and around communities.

PACERS Small Schools Cooperative

The PACERS Small Schools Cooperative consists of 29 schools that are located in 25 rural communities within the state of Alabama and geographically clustered throughout the state to "enhance collaboration between the schools." The purpose of the cooperative is to "highlight the contributions of small schools, demonstrate the benefits of educational approaches rooted in [the] community, and to underscore the importance of small size for responsive, flexible, and responsible schools." In an effort to build local capacity, the organization established a framework rooted in the notion of a "cooperative."

Alabama: Pacers Small Schools Cooperative

A student photo project is sponsored by the PACERS Small Schools Cooperative. The purpose of the project is to give students the opportunity to document their schools and communities. Students capture images of themselves, elders, and others in the community to create visual stories of rural ways of living and knowing. Above is the Collinsville Student Photo Project.

Here, a student uses a computer manufactured by Tiger Computers. The company was "...established as a computer assembly business to meet the need for high quality school computers. Tiger Computers has expanded its focus to include training and consulting, networking, and computer maintenance." (From PACERS Annual Report 17)

These photographs were taken by Candace Cochrane, a Research Associate for the Annenberg Rural Challenge.

Located in the southwest region of Alabama, Packers Bend is a rural community consisting of some 125 African-American families. Acting in a similar capacity as the seven churches within Packers Bend, Monroe Senior High School functions as a center for community activity. Although a part of Monroe County, the community is separated from all other inhabitants of the county by the Alabama River.

On March 13, 1997, a celebration occurred in the community of Packers Bend at Monroe Senior High School. The event was entitled; *Celebration of Community and Place: Elder's Wisdom, Children's Song.* Larry Long of PACERS, was involved in the creation of Celebration of Community and Place. Prior to this performance, students in grades three, four, five and six had the opportunity to hear stories from elders within the community during a one-week period of time. The culmination of the project resulted not only in five choirs from the community actively participating in the program, but the production of a CD as well. In order to create the songs, the students constructed lyrics from the stories of elders with Larry Long's music. Students had the opportunity to write, edit and reflect upon a life that is inextricably tied to the community itself. Drama, another program sponsored in part by PACERS, was also supported within the community. Many community members turned out for the production of the musical entitled *Time Brings About Change.*

Packers Bend community members learned a great deal during the past year in their struggle to keep the school open when the county school board wanted to close it at the end of the 1996-97 school year. In their ardent endeavors to sway the board, the community became more cognizant of the fact that the school is a vital, meaningful and essential part of Packers Bend. More importantly the board's decision to keep the school open and to "monitor" the school's progress over a period of months, has paved the way for continual and stronger ties between the community and the school in the future.

5. Community-school exchange involves multiple entry points.

...the death of hope in many communities during the 1980s was far more devastating than the economic squeeze...as the teachers, administrators and students reconstruct the buildings, businesses, art and history of their communities, they are eventually engaged in the reconstruction of hope.
Paul Olson, School at the Center (Nebraska)

Alaska: Alaska Native Rural Challenge

The photos above were taken by Scott Christian, a Research Associate of the Annenberg Rural Challenge.

Elders in the community work with young people in school and in summer camps sharing language, traditions, and cultural activities. Many of the activities in a curriculum, based on *Native Ways of Knowing*, focus on how people must engage with the resources of the land--the fish, the water, and the weather to contribute to the livelihood of the people in the community.

Entry points into community-school exchange are sometimes initiated by parents; at other times it grows from an interest in historical preservation. More often, however, it has roots in a question of economic and social sustainability – the creation of jobs as well as a healthy place to make a home.

In Alaska, there is a growing integration of resources from the school and community which includes natural and cultural themes. Such an integration, however, while apparent in one or two schools, is not yet apparent in all the Alaska sites. At Akula, elders in the community work with young people in school and in summer camps sharing language, traditions and cultural activities. Many of the activities in a curriculum based on *Native Ways of Knowing* focus on how humans must engage with the resources of the land and the ways the fish, the water, and the weather guide the livelihood of the people in the community.

Akula Elitnaurvik, Alaska:
A Community and School Becoming Integrated.

Akula typifies integration of community and school people because so much work had already been done by both parties in studying the Yup'ik language and culture. The school handbook begins with the following poem.

Life in the Qasgiq

(from: Akula's Yup'ik Studies Program, Elder Interviews, Kalila Slim")

In the qasgiq old men surround the light.
In the center there was a clay potted light.
The qasgiq was the first light to be lit.
The women fetched the light from the qasgik for their houses.
Long ago there were no big villages. Families stayed as groups.
People moved to summer fish camps every spring.
When schools were built, groups of families moved near the school.
Nunivak was the first to have a school. Tununak was the second. Kipnuk was the third. This is when the Yup'ik way of life changed.

In Kasigluk, and throughout the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta, the majority of people live to some degree by subsistence. Although the term "subsistence" is often used to refer to hunting and gathering, here in Kasigluk it also involves a very deep spiritual relationship with the land and the ecosystem of the tundra. In Akula Elitnaurviak there is a strong emphasis throughout the community-school program on respect and people working together. The means of survival is still subsistence through hunting, fishing and gathering, although there is increasing reliance on the cash economy to provide necessities. This reality is totally reflected in the school's curriculum and teaching practices.

South Dakota: Program for Rural School and Community Renewal

"Planning Time: Junior English students Kristy Miller and Emily Reisch write a script for their documentary video about the farm crisis." The video was a part of a larger project around the reading of the book, *Broken Heartland*. (From the Program for Rural School and Community Renewal Newsletter, 6).

The Program for Rural School and Community Renewal in South Dakota represents another example of a project that has developed multiple entry points for community-school exchange.

The Program for Rural School and Community Renewal in South Dakota

The Program for Rural School and Community Renewal was created in 1994 as a response to the ongoing deterioration of rural community life in South Dakota. The program was built around two assumptions: 1) concerted study and discussion is required in order to understand all of the forces leading to rural community deterioration, and 2) there is much that a school can do for its community and vice-versa.

In South Dakota, the exchange of community and school has included local representatives of the business community who encourage young people to develop entrepreneurial activities to benefit the community including newspaper businesses, small retail sales, and a Yellow Pages of youth job talents (e.g. baby-sitting and elder support, car and house repair, and animal care and services). As the newsletter of one community so aptly summarized:

The one thing we knew when we began working at sharing resources of community and school was that things would change. The changes came as a result of people (students, teaching staff and other citizen) being re-educated and empowered through talking and reading. People learned about their local culture, their local heritage, and their local circumstances. The changes have come in the form of a renewed curriculum, a school that is a gathering place, a faculty that are community experts, and a citizenry who have become school experts. There has been a wake up call issued to the community. The call says: You better learn about what you are about, learn how to live together, learn how to sustain your community, for if you do not, nobody else will and all will be lost.

6. Community-school exchange is sometimes new territory.

One of the most important contributions that indigenous people are bringing to the scientific and educational areas is a temporal dimension, that is a long-term perspective spanning many generations of observation and experimentation, which enriches the relatively short-term, time-bound observations of itinerant western-oriented scientists and educators. Angayuquaq Oscar Kawagley (Alaska Project)

Oregon: Tillamook County Education Consortium

Tillamook county is separated by a vast range of mountains, the Oregon Coast range and the Tillamook State forest. Isolated from major population areas, the Superintendents in the county (three women), began intensive conversations about meeting the needs of long-time and newcoming residents. The purposes of their efforts were the following: 1) To make life in this isolated county *sustainable*, and 2) To make life for county youth *desirable* so they can stay or return.

The bringing together of resources that both school and community can offer each other is pioneer work and interactions between them are sometimes tentative. The Tillamook Consortium efforts to date paint a picture of new initiatives between three communities, three administrations and three school districts.

Tillamook Education Consortium
Tillamook, Oregon

Isolated from the major population centers of Portland and central Oregon, Tillamook county is separated by a vast range of mountains, the Oregon Coast range and the Tillamook State forest. The area was originally settled by the Killimuck people who lived along the coast and rivers, sustaining their villages by fishing and hunting. Newcomers eventually claimed this land and turned it into dairy farms and logging businesses. Today it is a growing tourist destination.

Tillamook county has three school districts (north, central and south) and three Superintendents. Two years ago the three Superintendents (all women) began a series of intensive conversations in their communities. The topic of the conversations focused on how to build community among this diverse mix of old timer and newcomer residents. The purposes of the effort was to:

1. make life in this isolated county *sustainable*,
2. make life for county youth *desirable* so they stay or return.

The Superintendents realized that the schools did not have the resources to tackle these issues alone and set about forming partnerships with parents, business people, elders and volunteer organizations, and institutions of higher education. In 1995 they formed the Tillamook Education Consortium, hired Ed Armstrong, a newcomer with imagination, as coordinator. The combined leadership of Ed and the three school heads has united diverse communities which no one person could have done. The Consortium now funds projects which link communities and schools:

• *Community in the Schools* is implemented through a unique program called Lunch Buddies. The schools have been proactive about matching students who have low self-esteem, fragile home situations, or need help with basic academic skills with a steady, positive adult from the community. The 'buddies' meet weekly to spend time together eating and sharing time discussing whatever the student feels is important.

• *Students in the Community* is exemplified in the Oregon Youth Conservation Corps which works with students about to drop out of high school. They pair students with jobs in the logging industry, fire fighting and other land oriented projects. Their on-the-job training is used as high school credit and helps them

Oregon: Tillamook County Education Consortium

Tillamook county is the home of some of the best milk and cheese produced in the country. The seven streams in the county, coupled with a mild climate, allow for Holstein, Jersey, and Guernsey herds to produce fresh supplies of milk. The milk is not only sold on the open market, but is also used for cheesemaking--an integrated part of the economy of the area.

earn their diplomas in non-traditional ways. Tillamook High is developing a Certificate of Advanced Mastery for students who want to combine their academic study with on-the-job training in the field of Health Occupations.

There appears to be a growing momentum among teachers to orient their curriculum in the direction of community-school integration. There is some evidence that students are beginning to see job possibilities in the community that they were not aware of before.

New territory in rural communities is sometimes developed through the use of various technologies. The Mendocino story is one direction.

The Mendocino Unified School District (part of the North Coast Rural Challenge Network -- California) provides internet services to the local community. It currently serves 360 local businesses and individuals who have subscribed to the service (for $25 per month). The expectation is that the number of local subscribers will reach 1000 within the next year. Teachers and students in the schools also have access to the service, using the internet to engage in studies about earthquakes and community preparedness.

Elizabeth Shore, of the Autodisk Foundation, one of the funders, noted:

> *Schools were historically the center of the town's life, however, that's not true in most places today...Mendocino is creating a model of how to make the school the center of the community again...*

The Table below represents a summary of themes and multiple data sources from the first year's work of the Research and Evaluation Team.

Compiled Themes of Community-School Exchange

Theme	Documentation	Community Response
1. Community-school exchange results in mutual benefits.	Observations Interviews Portfolios Survey Analysis	The community and school grow together over time learning to value mutual interests.
2. Community-school exchange is diverse, complex and full of culture and history.	Observations Interviews Portfolios Survey Analysis	Many stories become valued, respect for difference enlarges, diversity of contact grows.
3. Community-school exchange means acknowledging the underlying cultural views.	Observations Interviews Portfolios	Intergenerational activities enlarge; community values begin to be studied.
4. Community-school exchange makes use of collective talents.	Observations Site Reports Interviews Portfolios Survey Analysis	A collection of community members are invited to work together so that more people become genuine teachers.
5. Community-school exchange involves multiple entry points.	Observations Site Reports Interviews Portfolios Survey Analysis	Is this community a place for young people to stay? or must they leave?
6. Community-school exchange is sometimes new territory.	Observations Site Reports Interviews Portfolios Survey Analysis	We believe in it but have limited experience. Whose job is it to start? What are the boundaries of schools? communities?

Community-School Exchange as a Continuum

My daughter is much more aware of everything around her.
Parent, Selborne Project (New York)

Community and school exchange themes appear across a collection of Rural Challenge sites, but a further analysis of the work suggests the idea of a continuum. This continuum helps describe the range of community-school exchanges that were documented across Rural Challenge sites.

The continuum can be sorted roughly into a sequence that moves from 1) activities to 2) community based projects to 3) community-school integration. While the continuum could also have been developed as a theme in the foregoing section, it seemed appropriate to present it as a separate but related idea, *another* way to represent what we learned from the various Rural Challenge sites. Importantly, however, we do not want to argue that the continuum necessarily represents "developmental stages." Each element, in fact, represents a kind of exchange. In many cases, projects had some of all three elements embodied in their work simultaneously. The following section will discuss the continuum and offer examples of how these play out in action in a variety of Annenberg sites.

1. ACTIVITIES

There are many examples of school-centered activities where the community exchange enriched the curriculum, was a function of community service projects, or where the school was the 'center' for community events, activities and/or services. For example, activities are often focused on the classroom, a particular content area or even a unit of study, and may only include one or two teachers in an entire school. Such activities are mostly short term and use the community as one of many resources to 'teach' the unit. This category also covers examples of community service projects which in some cases are part of the graduation requirements for middle and high schools. Finally, the category includes examples in which the school is simply a site for structured activities and services used by members of the community. We provide below a number of examples.

Curriculum Enrichment

• Lotts Creek Community School in Cordia, Kentucky is organizing its curriculum around the following questions: 1) How did Cordia get started and how has it changed since its beginnings? 2) What is community? and 3) What makes our community unique?

Pennsylvania & New York: The Selborne Project

The above photograph was taken by Candace Cochrane, a Research Associate for the Annenberg Rural Challenge.

The Roger Tory Peterson Institute sponsors a 10 day summer training session for teams of teachers who wish to adopt a holistic, hands-on method of teaching and learning through its Selborne Project. Teachers learn skills with which to explore the natural world, and then work together to design a curriculum focusing on the square kilometer around their school building.

• Students at Falconer Elementary School in Falconer, New York (Selborne) selected several locations to test the water in their square kilometer. They chose Room 160, the drinking fountain by the bathrooms, the 6th grade wing and the Chadakoin River where it enters and leaves the plot. They learned the steps for taking a water sample which includes describing the location of the sample, and attaching the information to the bottle, then running a variety of tests on the water and analyzing their findings.

• High school science students in an Alabama school collect blood from trout and horseshoe crabs. They separate it in the lab into serum/red blood cells. The red blood cells are used in the treatment of cancer patients.

• In a Nebraska town the local business people came to the 9th grade classes to teach the '7 habits' of a successful businessperson. The businesses covered the costs of their presentations in the schools.

• At the Birchwood School (Wisconsin) "issues forums" are regularly held to bring community people and school people (including students) together to discuss community-school concerns.

Community Service

• A South Dakota elementary/middle school set up a greenhouse and a truck garden. They supply the local grocer with fresh vegetables.

• One school district, associated with Paradigm Partners (Wisconsin), had its middle school students prepare a simple survey which asked local residents what their expectations were for the school. They included a self-addressed stamped envelope. After they tabulated the results of 28 questions, they found that academics ranked 24 out of 28. The respondents were most interested in making sure the school produced respectful, disciplined and honest kids.

• In Belle Fouche (South Dakota) students studied the community and its needs intensively for six months before there was any discussion about starting a business. As people from Belle Fouche noted, "It is easy to start a business, the hard part is teaching community."

• One fifth grade student at Russell Elementary (Pennsylvania) describes her community service project as follows: *"For my project I am working at the Humane Society. I'd like to start a pop-can collection for the Humane Society to help the dogs and cats. My mom would pick up the cans once a week, like on Fridays, and then we (my mom and I) would take them to the Humane Society. They could turn these cans in for money. The money would go into food, leashes, collars, toys,*

treats, and other useful things. This would not count for my school project, we are just volunteering."

School as Community Center

• *The Gaylesville Enterprise* (Alabama) is not only the school newspaper, but the community newspaper as well. The paper was re-established in 1993 and is historically rooted in a local newspaper that went out of print around the turn of the century. The PACERS Small Schools Cooperative was involved in providing the initial training for students. The monthly publication of *The Gaylesville Enterprise* is mailed out, free of charge, to local community members and Gaylesville-related people in and outside of the state. Thirty students are involved with the publication and the newspaper is solely supported through donations and advertisements. The paper has been recognized locally and nationally for outstanding journalism and community coverage. Recently, the newspaper ran a series on the occupation of Gaylesville during the Civil War, as told through the letters of soldiers and members of the community.

• In Kooskie (Idaho) a local business refurbished an old opera house and made it into a theater. Now the Kooskie students (high school and elementary) are involved in drama productions for the entire community.

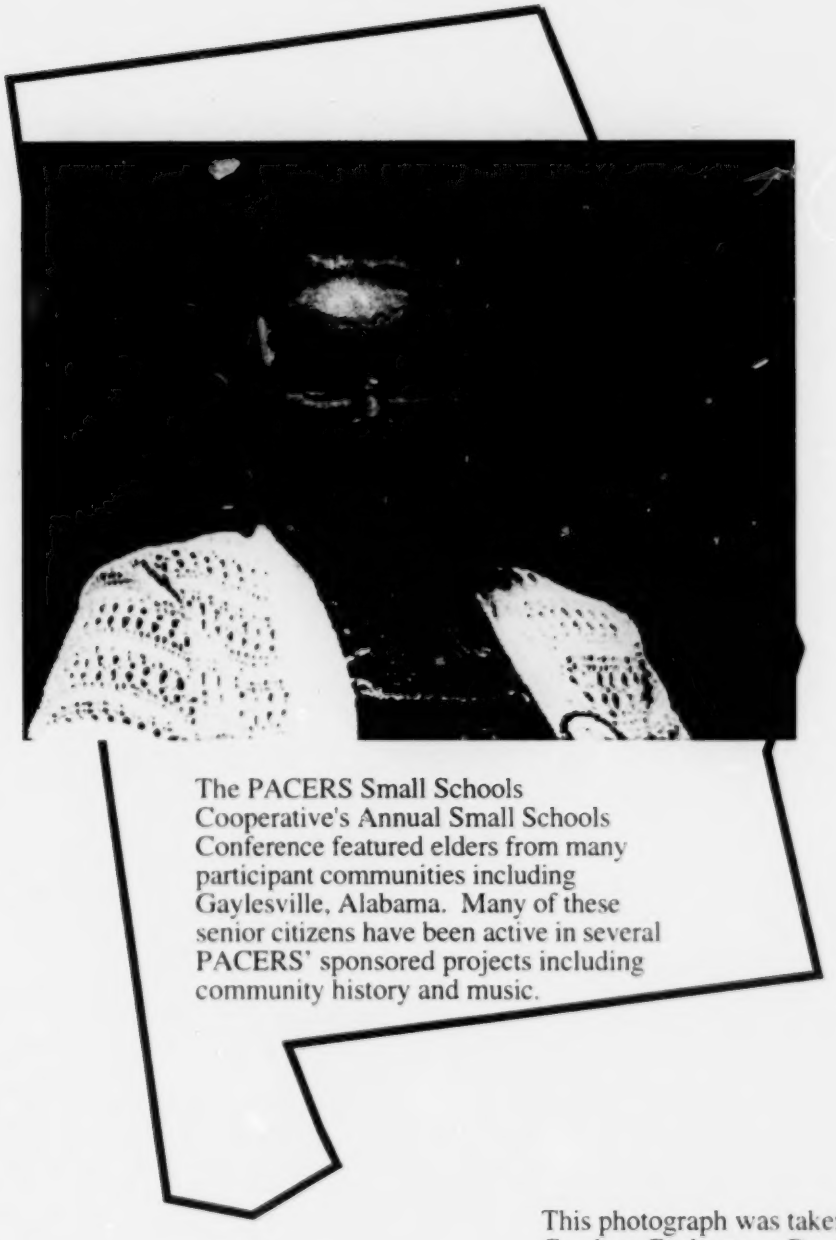
• In Comptonville (California), is an effort to bring parents and members of the community together, a "Twilight School" has been established and meets one evening each week in the school. The purpose is to make clear that the space belongs to them. Participants can enroll in courses or offer courses. All presenters are local people. The custodian teaches a cake decorating class, local artists teach their crafts. People are learning that there are many talents in the community.

• At Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe School (Wisconsin), sixteen elders now come regularly to work with the children, bringing elders' wisdom to the classrooms. The distance between what happens at school and what happens in the community is closing.

2. PROJECTS

Projects usually include the major institutions in a community in relationship with a whole school and potentially influences the pedagogy/philosophy of the school. The category covers medium and long-term projects that are initiated either by a single teacher, group of teachers, church members, or community leaders. The project fills two needs – one which the community perceives is important and in which they need more information or some resolution, and one which allows teachers to apply theories in science, writing, mathematics, civics, history, geography, and the like, to real life situations.

Alabama: Pacers Small Schools Cooperative



The PACERS Small Schools Cooperative's Annual Small Schools Conference featured elders from many participant communities including Gaylesville, Alabama. Many of these senior citizens have been active in several PACERS' sponsored projects including community history and music.

This photograph was taken by Candace Cochrane, a Research Associate for the Annenberg Rural Challenge.

This could be thought about in relation to the following two questions: "What are the ways the schools make use of the community and its resources to alter the ways content is taught in school?" and "What are the ways the community uses the school to deal with significant community concerns?"

• Mariposa (California) now holds its "New Generations Conference" in which students invite decision-makers in the community (School Board members, county administrators, county planners, environmentalists) to meet with them. These conferences, involving as many as 125 students have resulted in students becoming regular participants at county meetings and citizen meetings related to development.

• At Elm Valley (South Dakota) students have opportunities to shadow employed people in the local community to learn more about the local economy and possible employment opportunities. We present two student accounts of their shadowing experiences:

Shadowing at Computer Specialists: *In the store...I was able to understand more of what I was learning in computer class by seeing all of the components of the computer working together and being able to see their importance and functions...Though I don't think that I will get into the hardware repair area as a career, I do see the importance of knowing all the parts of the computer and their functions. I have a hard time now keeping myself from tearing up our own computer and figuring out its insides.*

Shadowing at Lucille's Beauty Salon in Ellendale: *The salon was a stereotypical small town salon where everyone knew everyone. The people were friendly and very helpful in helping me decide on whether or not cosmetology was the choice for me...They were not there to talk up any college so I got honest answers about Stewarts since they both attended it...They let me prepare someone for their hair cut by putting on the apron and the neck guard. I got to wash hair, take out perm rods, and answer the phone and attempt to make appointments. I even got to do some of the dirty work like cleaning the curlers, sweeping up hair, and folding the towels. It was fun. They were very nice people.*

• Three school districts on the Tennessee, Georgia, and South Carolina borders are working with grass-roots people who have a rich knowledge of native plants and wildflowers. Students in the schools are collaborating with the Fell Creek Falls State Park, The Cooperative Extension Service, and Tennessee State University to identify and replant native plants and flowers which are currently rare and endangered.

3. INTEGRATION

The third category of community-school integration covers projects that demonstrate a fully integrated, community-centered philosophy of learning. Everyone is seen as a resource, from elders to young people, and everyone has a voice in the decisions that are being made. The community initiates the move toward engaging schools, churches, civic groups, businesses, government agencies. The school is in partnership with the community and orients its entire program to achieve academic excellence through a place-based philosophy and curriculum.

Community and school members are in constant dialogue asking critical questions about their relationship. How does the school join other community institutions to produce systemic change which lasts beyond the life of individual students; how do all the institutions in the community teach people how to live well in their place? We must acknowledge that this level of integration takes time. It is reached in relation to some areas more easily than in others; for example, around cultural matters (which some of the Native communities exemplify) and economic matters (as shown in some of the South Dakota sites).

Community School Integration In A Pedagogy of Place: A Sample Lesson

This lesson, used with the youngest children in the school in Akula Elementary, provides a sample of how learning is based on human survival, in Yup'ik terms of substistence which depends on a world view of knowing the land and its ecosystem. It provides children with a sense of the close observation of the natural world that the Yup'ik people maintain -- learning about the weather that surrounds them and determines their daily life. When they gather this kind of information and it becomes a part of the school day they are perpetuating the culture and traditions of the village -- being prepared for hunting, fishing and gathering by knowing how humans relate to their environment.

A good part of the lessons about learning how to predict the weather involves Big Lake, the large body of water just a short distance from the village. More importantly though, this kind of teaching reveals the very close relationship with the natural world, and the intense awareness of changes in the environment, and how they relate to each other within the various systems.

Alaska: Alaska Native Rural Challenge

In Alaska, there is a growing integration of resources from school and community which includes natural and cultural themes. In the picture above an elder from the community of Akula Elitnaurvik, Alaska, shares his wisdom with a group of students and other volunteers from the community. This photo was taken by Scott Christian, a Research Associate of the Annenberg Rural Challenge.

Predicting Weather

- Red sky in the morning means the weather will get bad before evening.
- If the sun has a border, it means bad weather is coming. This in Yup'ik is called "uqrutaq".
- If clouds are stretched, it means it is going to get windy in a day or two, depending on the elevation of the clouds.
- In winter when the sun has rods on each side, this means it is going to be very cold. In Yup'ik it is called "ayarurluni" or "aliimaterluni".
- In the evening if the moon is blurry, this means bad weather.
- If the stars are glimmering more than usual, this means the weather will become windy.
- A rainbow, which is "agluryaq" in Yup'ik, means the weather is getting better.
- During summer when the sun has rays on the bottom, it means the rain is coming.

Predicting Weather For The Coming Winter

Tall grass during fall means the winter will be cold.
Shorter grass during fall means winter will not be too cold.
If the salmonberry has leaves on its peel, it means that it is where the wind will be blowing from during winter.

Examples of Weather Vocabulary

AKERTEM KINGYALLRA=Pinkish hue on the clouds, half way across the sky, the sun as it is setting, the weather will be good the following day. Pinkish hue all across the sky means the weather will get bad before the day is over.

AVAIRTUQ=Clear sky in winter, it will be cold.

NAPAYAGAAT TUNGUAQATA=When the willow trees get dark and the frost melts on them, it is going to get warm.

NANVARPIIM QULII=When the sky clears up or gets light colored above the Big Lake during bad weather with south winds, the weather is going to clear up.
**Inivkaq-mirage is another indicator= Weather is going to get bad. (cold)

MOON
(Tequllumiik) Mecignaunani iraluq=
(small) Fog around the moon, bad weather for 2 days.
(big) Fog around the moon, bad weather for 5 days.

The Community Resource Center at the Howard School (South Dakota) is a product of community contributions and student research and serves as an additional representation of integration. It is a venue for historical records, biographies, the pulse of the county's history. It is a place for students and community people to meet, to share the attractions of the place, its possibilities for the future. The following story, that occurred at the Community Resource Center, was recounted at the Rendezvous:

An older man was looking at a photo from World War II and one of the students tapped him on the right shoulder -- I'll never forget this -- and he turned around and she said to him, 'Were you in the war?' and he said, 'Yes, I was.' And she said, 'Well, would you tell me about it?' And all the kids who were there sat down at the table and this individual very few people knew about told some of his story. He had the silver star. We didn't even know that part of a book had been written about him, and this person was in our community. As he sat there, the stories came out and their eyes got so big, and finally I could see the tears coming out of the veteran's eyes and he was one of the ones in the battle at Okinawa and was one of only three left in his battalion. And he was wounded and he made certain sacrifices to keep others alive. And, it was amazing to see the reaction of the students and also his reaction because I talked to him afterwards and he said, "You know, I have never ever told this story before? And it's always been in the back of my mind and I have never let it out."

Implications

Everyone is looking out for your child and you're doing the same.
Parent -- Howard, South Dakota

The Rural Challenge has made an impressive beginning. Twenty-six projects, involving hundreds of schools and communities, have been funded. In virtually every setting a beginning has been made around place; a genuine concern about the local setting is assuming prominence.

By framing our report as we have, we intended to help Rural Challenge participants clarify even more the potential of community-school exchange. To this end, there are many examples in the report about ways various sites have supported community-school exchange.

South Dakota: Program for Rural School and Community Renewal

"Local Historians: Norma Clemetson, Lulu Anderson, and Leta Trusty donate their time and talents to keeping the Rural center decorated according to the varying themes. All three ladies are retired from the school system and are very active in the Minor County Historical Society" (From the Program for Rural School and Community Renewal Newsletter, 4).

Given what we have learned, we can clearly make a beginning on describing this crucial exchange "at its best." In doing so, however, we are obviously offering ideas which will be filled out over time, less by us than by those who are engaged in the real work of schools and communities.

We begin with the understanding that any examination of "real community concerns," a critical starting point for any exchange, is best done in cooperation with people in the local community. In the best of worlds, all the related discussions would have an intergenerational quality. Some common ideals (premises) would be present if communities and their schools were truly systems of mutual exchange. These collective ideals are probably not fully attainable, but can become statements of vision for those who struggle with helping communities and schools more fully share resources for the common good. At its best, what does it mean to speak of community-school exchange?

Sue Locarno, an Annenberg Fellow at Breadloaf, offers the following perspective as a teacher, community member and parent:

Community-school integration as its best: students, teachers and community members, including parents and administrators work collaboratively in structured but informal committees. Committees set short and long term goals that [account for school goals] and community goals and then work together to implement them. We, the voices of the community, meet frequently enough to get past the surface strokes and understand the jargon we each hold dear. We continue to seek more involvement and disseminate information, particularly about concrete progress. We work together and play together.

In this view, community-school exchange "at its best" grows out of an integration of school and community goals. It also relates to a shared understanding of language around mutual hopes.

Other ways to consider this exchange in its largest form include the following:

- **The community is viewed as a resource-laden, learning laboratory.**

We think here of the work in South Dakota, Alaska and Nebraska in which the local communities are understood to have large assets. This stands in sharp contrast to the language of deficit that exists in many rural communities (and was described by many participants at the Rendezvous).

- **The school's resources are more fully available to people in the community.**

In many Rural Challenge sites there is an increasing understanding that the library and computer resources of the schools should be fully available to community people. We were impressed by efforts made in many schools to provide ongoing

workshops around computer use.

- **While economic development and/or stability is important, support of traditional lifestyles, the history, language, art, literature, culture and religious practices of the local area is also critical.**

We live in a heavily materialistic society. The media are full of references to progress being equated with the larger, what exists elsewhere, mostly in the cities. Everything is about change rather than stability. In settings in which community-school exchange is moving most constructively, local values, traditions, languages, beliefs are understood to matter, worthy of study and celebration.

- **The day-to-day life of the local community is integral to what happens in school.**

Students in the schools learn to value the local environment -- they have an affection for the place, they understand what the values are and where they have come from and what it takes to sustain such values. This suggests that a curriculum can be constructed from what exists in the local setting.

It means asking, as Jim Lentz, the principal of the Howard (S.D.) school says, *"How can we make this place [our county] a place we want to live in, a place that can survive well into the future?"* It also provides a base for young people to understand the values that surround them, to learn that, even if they leave, that where they come from is important. This was something we heard many at the Rendezvous stress. They were concerned about young people gaining a sense of pride in their place.

- **Students in the schools are viewed as important community resources, as active rather than passive observers, involved in solving critical problems in the community.**

In this country, we have generally come to undervalue our children and young people. Yet, in increasing numbers of Rural Challenge communities, students in the schools are engaged in documenting their local histories, restoring historic buildings, building nature trails, developing community resource guides, doing ongoing water safety tests, monitoring environmental conditions, serving on local boards, writing draft legislation meant to support small communities. This is real democratic work, the work of commonwealth.

The young students from Idelia, Colorado (Stewards of the High Plains) expressed such a view as they described at the Rural Challenge Rendezvous that they participated actively, alongside adults, in every committee that related to the well-being of their community because "the community belonged to everyone." As one student noted about this community without a mayor, "along with the adults, we are the mayors of the town."

We also heard about meetings that took place at Lac Courte Oreilles, and Ojibwa community related to Paradigm Partners, in which students from the school had as much voice as other members of the community at tribal council meetings. Educating students to be active citizens within their communities, now as well as in the future, suggests a different view of educational practices and purposes.

- **The curriculum of the school grows from real community issues - - things that matter to people who live in the community**.

Environmental concerns, loss of population, housing, health concerns, limited tax resources, library services, and employment are examples. This is a recognition that there are serious issues facing rural communities. When rural schools and communities consider these issues together, citizenship is extended, care for one's place assumes a higher priority, and the potential for optimism about the future enlarges.

Wendell Berry describes the need for the local community to be "the frame of reference for responsible work." Those who know community life can find aspects of that life wherever they go. Living well in other places means keeping the spirit of cooperative relationships alive - - taking the walks, interacting with neighbors, finding the good in the local. Liberty Hyde Bailey (who directed the Rural Life Commission prior to World War I) suggests that a school in rural settings should be "a school of affairs" that "deals with real, actual essential things, problems and events and develops practical knowledge and ability." We like this definition of schools. It is our intention, along with participants in Rural Challenge sites, to fill out the foregoing understandings in future reports. For now, we trust that the formulation, even in this form, can be a basis for discussion within Rural Challenge sites.

Possible Barriers to Community-School Exchange

As we reflect on the foregoing view of Community-School Integration at its best, we acknowledge a number of possible barriers that rural schools and communities face. As put forward in "Home Groups" at the Rural Challenge Rendezvous, none can be viewed as trivial. We present below, in chart form, the most common expressions of barriers articulated across sites.

Possible Barriers	Perceptions
There is a long history of separation between schools and communities.	A history of conservatism exists on both sides. Negative attitudes on both sides.
In some settings, family/community aspirations for schools are not high.	High school graduation is not valued. Further schooling means going away.
Communities have little control over their schools; federal government & state offices exert increasing control.	Decisions about school are made by people outside the community.
State education departments are increasingly demanding that all schools meet single standards leaving little room for local interpretation and place-based curriculum.	State standards do not account for local cultures, languages and world views. Testing programs too heavily influence the curriculum and what is being taught.
The rural schooling process is often distant from local communities.	Consolidated high schools are often far away, and not connected to their communities. Post secondary schooling means going elsewhere to study and work.
Communities have suffered environmental degradation so positive images of place are hard to see.	Excessive logging, mining, farming have destroyed the land and its resources. Chemicals have toxified the water and air.
The rural schooling process is often described in deficit terms.	Rural schools do not have enough resources, courses, technology or vocational training.

One participant from Arkansas (in a district targeted by the State for poor test scores) likely spoke for many as she described the pressures the children feel. She noted that the recent test day was a disaster with children throwing-up, ripping up tests, and crying. She mentioned that her five year old told her "Mom, I have to do well on this test...our whole school is depending on us to do well so we can keep the school here." While not everyone saw the tests as necessarily being the determiner of whether their local school continued to stay open, many were clear that the focus on tests would limit greatly how much they would veer from the State Curriculum Frameworks. They believed they could not do as much local curriculum as they might like.

Consolidation has taken a toll. Many of the Rural Challenge communities lost their high schools many years ago. These schools are often seen as distant, understood to be "in the middle of nowhere."[5]

There is considerable ambivalence about the value of many local traditions. Which are worthy of celebration? Worth reclaiming? In some communities the traditions have negative meanings for particular populations. There is also the dilemma of new people with different values coming into long established communities. What were once more unified communities are now divided communities.

Rural schools have long adopted the mission of preparing students for post-secondary schooling and employment elsewhere. This kind of "vocationalism" is difficult to change.

The language of deficit is potent in many rural communities - - that sense that "we don't have enough courses, enough technology, enough vocational education opportunities." The students at the Rendezvous spoke a good deal about the limitations of their schools academically. It is hard <u>not</u> to believe the media depiction of rural schools and communities.

Many communities have suffered considerable environmental destruction over the last fifty years (from excessive mining, logging and farming, chemical spillage, the toxification of ground waters). People find it hard to talk positively about their geographic place.

[5] Vito Perrone described the following experience about "the middle of nowhere." Many years ago, I picked up a young student from the North Dakota State University in Fargo. He was on his way home. As we passed a school on the highway, in the center of a field with nothing around it, he said he went to that school, commenting on the fact that it was in "the middle of nowhere." I then asked him about the trailer that was adjacent to the school. He told me that the school's custodian lived there. He then said "Can you imagine living there, in the middle of nowhere?" When we came to his road, he mentioned that I could drop him off and he would walk the rest of the way. When he said it was another couple of miles, I decided to drive him to his house. As we drove down the gravel road, there were fields on both sides. The first homestead we came to was his -- two miles from the highway. I recalled for him that he had described the school and the trailer home as being "in the middle of nowhere," suggesting that his home was also in the middle of a large expanse of "empty land." He quickly said, "This [his home] isn't in the middle of nowhere -- it is my home, it's where I live, where I grew up. Those fields that we passed belong to us. We farm that land."

We acknowledge that the foregoing does not address the shift that a more local focus demands of teachers. At the Rural Challenge Rendezvous, teachers were enthusiastic about the various community rooted curricula they saw and heard described but also expressed concern about how to engage in such work successfully. The need to provide assistance here is, we believe, critical.

What wasn't discussed much around the barriers to community-school exchange that we believe to be important is the language of reform. By and large, it is framed around change, a language that does not resonate well in many rural communities, particularly when it comes from the outside. A language that would seem to make a better connection to rural communities is the language of celebration, reclamation and stability. Such language is embedded in the conception surrounding a Pedagogy of Place - - which needs more careful definition within the Rural Challenge.

One of the definitions that we believe is useful relates to a striving for a conception of education that values what is close by, that is not motivated by jobs, by economic imperatives. In such a conception, families matter, the environment matters, the churches matter, human values can be discussed. Students, whatever their ages, as well as adults, whatever their ages, can be seen as important resources. They can ask together, "what needs doing here to make this a better place to live, now and in the future?"

Concluding Statements

Overall, the following perceptions of school community exchange seem most prominent across all sites of the Annenberg Rural Challenge. We offer them as additional ideas to consider.

Schools Most Often Initiate the Exchange

The schools were, for the most part, central, setting the agendas, controlling how the exchange proceeded. People from the local communities were invited into many classrooms to share stories about their place, but these were most often special events. Parent conferences were scheduled and participation was generally large. Teachers shared the work of students and there seemed to be genuine interest among parents about school work that was being done in relation to the local community.

Community and Schools Discover Mutually Beneficial Interactions

As people in schools left their buildings and entered the community, they discovered many resources that they hadn't been accustomed to using - - other than having a person from a particular agency come in to talk. The sites in Northern California, Wisconsin, and South Dakota shared stories of learning that many State and Federal agencies had lost personnel and needed help with such things as: inventorying and mapping abandoned mines, marking trails, doing animal counts, monitoring water quality, doing erosion studies, and the like. In making connections with such agencies as the Federal Bureau of Land Management, State and Federal Park Services, Wildlife and Fisheries agencies, Environmental Protection agencies, Water Management boards, State and local Historical Societies, teachers have been able to get their students involved in <u>real</u> studies. These studies take young people out of the school and into their communities, which, in turn, help students make "a personal investment in their communities." There was talk about how the quality of work done by the students and the schools raised confidence levels among those outside the schools. Students were seen as important resources.

Young and Older People Become Collective Resources to Local Communities

One of the projects of students in Elm Valley, SD was a community resource inventory. It became the community Yellow Pages, a listing of all the local resources - - for services, teaching, hobbies, interests, economic activities. No one expected such a wide range of resources - - so many interesting people - - in this local area. It provided the students with an even greater appreciation of their community. The community as a whole also found the Yellow Pages informative and practical. It engendered "real admiration for the students in the school" and a sense of interdependence.

Negative School-Community Histories Create Challenges to Exchange

Schools have often taken their communities for granted, expecting local people to be supportive and remain surprised when questions are raised.

In Steamboat, Colorado, a site within the Yampa Valley Project that has had over the past decade a growing school population, the schools sought to alleviate overcrowding with a major bond issue for new construction. Within the construction was a new high school, to be placed on the outskirts of the town. To the surprise of school officials, the opposition was large. The community voted down the bond proposal. With encouragement from several community leaders, the decision was made to invite those who were most opposed to head a task force to resolve what most people understood to be a serious space problem.

Community meetings were held and it was clear that many people saw the problem in different ways. Alternatives were suggested that were different from what was presented in the bond proposal. In the end, a proposal was made that was different, didn't create a new high school building away from the town center, seemed much more imaginative in scope and use of existing space, and overall, lower in cost. This new proposal passed. The process has gone a long way toward reconstructing trust and creating different ways for the school and community to interact. Community forums are becoming more common in this site as a result.

Community and Schools Are Learning How to Interact

Moving beyond conventional practices is complicated for all people. There is not a lot of constructive experience in people's lives. Schools have long been places children and young people go to for basic education. School classrooms have long been the sites for the educational encounter. The principal sources for schooling are teachers, persons employed by the schools, books, films, computers. Field trips are not uncommon, but they are the occasional activity, a bit of frosting added to the curriculum. Using the community as a classroom, as a primary resource has not been a particularly common educational practice.

Drawing heavily on a community's human resources has not been common. The South Dakota stories resonated well, as did the stories from Alaska and Wisconsin. They opened up for Rendezvous participants other possibilities, other ways of thinking about the exchange, of thinking about curriculum that was more connected to place. The stories of good work need to be told well for the benefit of all.

Diversity Can be an Asset in Rural Communities

Rural communities, like urban communities, are diverse. Marty Strange suggests that a community is a place where people who disagree learn to work together. This is a reasonable suggestion, but it doesn't tap all that we heard at the Rendezvous in Granby. An Appalachian woman talked a good deal about how people in her community "hate hard and remember long." She suggested that such divisions were not so uncommon in rural places. A Native American woman followed by sharing the long split in her area between those who live on the reservation and those who don't. She didn't see those outside the reservation as supportive of Native people, culture or concerns.

An African American woman from South Carolina noted that before there is too much celebration of rural communities that we needed to acknowledge that African

Alabama: Pacers Small Schools Cooperative

The PACERS Small Schools Cooperative's Annual Small Schools Conference was held in April of 1997. The conference provided an opportunity for students and teachers of member schools to share and present their PACERS' sponsored projects. The photo above shows a student singing in the celebration of community and place performance and was taken by Candace Cochrane, a Research Associate of the Annenberg Rural Challenge.

Americans have little to celebrate in many of their communities. They have faced severe discrimination and violence. They have long made it clear to their children "to get out of here as fast as you can." It has gotten better as new people have come and opened up businesses. They don't have the negative history and they hire African Americans. The long-timers, she noted, don't like the newcomers much. At Granby, there was also discussion about the tendency to romanticize rural life. As several people suggested, "It isn't all so nice."

Competing Cultural Views Need Greater Recognition

There was some discussion among those at Granby about conformist pressures. Many of the students couldn't imagine doing much outside the school because "adults believe learning takes place in a school classroom." One student suggested that there are people who look through binoculars at the school, and call the school if they see anyone outside during school hours. One teacher from Yampa Valley, Colorado, described a teacher in one of the middle schools who did everything the Rural Challenge "seems to be supporting" and was always in big trouble. He wasn't following the curriculum closely enough. She also noted that he was a transplanted "hippie" which "may have also created some of the difficulty."

Standards and Tests Need Careful Consideration

There is a great deal of talk about "world class standards" and being first in Math and Science. It is mostly "political talk," seeming external to the ongoing needs of rural schools and communities. In the Rural Challenge sites there is a commitment to providing a high quality education but some of the discourse (supported by State policy formulations) suggests curricular patterns that are contrary to the place orientations of the Rural Challenge. Many schools, for example, are certain they will get pressure to devote less time to community-oriented work. We will pursue this issue more fully over the course of the next year, collect more systematically information about the effects of the standards' formulations and their accompanying tests.

The Message for Students

Within the Rural Challenge there is considerable support for reclaiming important community values and sustaining communities as places that support livelihoods for people and maintain the integrity of the environment. One way this message is received by students is that they should want to stay close to home. Yet, most of the students we talked with at the Rendezvous, a point also borne out in our survey data, is that they don't see a place for themselves.[7] While they appreciate their

[7] We have brought together survey data related to community-school exchange in Appendix E.

communities they also see their settings as limited socially and culturally. Their parents and teachers also have doubts about their children having a future in the local setting.

A teacher from the Yampa Valley Project (Colorado) expressed a view we heard often at the Rendezvous -- "I love my community" but "I encourage my children to leave, to see the world." She noted, "I don't talk much about my love for the community, the beauty, the safety, the warm feelings, but I should." It may be that students are not yet involved enough in the critical issues that their communities are facing. They need to be seen as important resources. It might also be the case that a different discourse is needed about what it means to do things of value wherever one goes while maintaining values that have long mattered in rural communities.

It could mean, as Paul Nachtigal suggests, helping young people to learn "to live well in communities" in whatever settings they find themselves, able to see the familiar, understand community as a place for shared work and shared history. It also might mean learning from the entrepreneurial activities that are so central to the work in Belle Fouche (South Dakota), the understanding that young people are developing an attitude about "creating jobs" rather than "seeking jobs."

In summary, many rural communities are working on ideas of community and school exchange, creating more interaction around resources of people, technology, the arts, and small businesses. Communities and schools are learning about how to interact socially, economically and academically. It is indeed important to see that community and school exchange requires a weaving together of separate cultures, which have been bound by a set of traditions and patterns of interaction.

As the Annenberg Rural Challenge moves into its second year, the most important goal would be to help build a vision of community-school exchange at its best. This vision may not be easily attainable, but may provide direction for rural communities who are engaged with the Rural Challenge. Creating explicit dialogue about how communities and schools might engage one another for the benefit of the students and their respective communities should help focus project leaders on collectively designing attainable goals and engage in more productive collaborative work.

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Appendix A
The Annenberg Rural Challenge
Leadership Shares Purposes

One means of understanding the Rural Challenge is to consider the views of the leadership. We present below what various Rural Challenge leaders shared in Granby, Colorado in July 1997.

Barbara Cervone - "Godmother" of the Annenberg Rural Challenge
The Annenberg Rural Challenge is one among an array of Annenberg Projects linked by a set of common themes. These themes suggest a reinvention of learning environments for individuals that recognize the following:
1) smallness is an important virtue;
2) communities are a critical part of schooling; and
3) schools and their communities should draw on locally based strengths.

Paul Nachtigal - Co-Director of the Annenberg Rural Challenge
What is the Annenberg Rural Challenge? It is a collection of students, teachers, community people, and leaders who share some common beliefs in:
1) creating more powerful learning for all children;
2) creating schools that interact fully with their communities;
3) creating public institutions more able to serve their communities, with schools being one of these institutions; and
4) affirming place as an important part of people's lives.

Toni Haas - Co-Director of the Annenberg Rural Challenge
What do we mean by Place Value in the work of the Annenberg Rural Challenge? How can the root of this work and this idea be explained?
It is rooted in a set of beliefs that help guide people's actions.

1) It is about Recreating a Sense of the Environment: It suggests that we all work to nurture our place and shift from extracting the natural resources of a place to preserving its resources - physical, cultural and economic.

2) It is about Civic Engagement: It suggests that involvement in the community is a critical action of all people who are part of a community. It suggests further that consolidation of schools to make them efficient systems eliminates the options for all people to participate.

3) It is about Recognizing a Rural Economy: The rural economy needs revitalization and this revitalization requires youth. We have taught young people to get jobs. We have ignored teaching young people how to create lives and make jobs in the places that they grow up in, even if they leave and come back.

4) It is about Spiritualism: It acknowledges a grandeur of place that helps remind us of the interconnectedness of people and place. The value of what we do gets placed in the community. Communities are places where we learn to live with people with whom we may disagree.

Jack Murrah - Chairman of the Board

In July of 1997, we celebrate our shared vision of communities and schools in rural places. This is in concert with the major purpose of the Annenberg Rural Challenge which is to allow Rural America to be reconsidered as a serious center of social and economic development and as a viable resource in this developing nation.

Appendix B
Thinking about the Annenberg Rural Challenge
Vito Perrone

I

Beginnings are often complex --filled with ambiguities, changing definitions, unexpected questions, uncertainties and doubts, alongside large hopes and surprising levels of energy. The Annenberg Rural Challenge has experienced fully such a beginning. While there is much to be said about the Rural Challenge's "starting up" period, this report is devoted primarily to the early work of the Rural Challenge Planning Committee, the National leadership and current Board. [1]

In 1994, the Annenberg Rural Challenge was a set of ideas being discussed by a small planning committee composed of long time rural school advocates and rural area theorists. For those who have been in and around rural schools, the ideas are familiar: support for the value, the efficacy of small schools; a belief that in such settings students become well known and the educational exchange is more personalized, thus enhancing learning; that ties to parents can be more productive and local people more connected; that a good and enriching life is possible in rural communities; that schools and communities can assume greater, more reciprocal responsibility for social and economic revitalization. Embedded in these ideas is a rejection of the seventy-five year history of large scale consolidation of schools, an understanding that such efforts have not produced to any significant degree greater efficiencies, lower costs or better education; that the standardization and bureaucratization of schools advanced by state agencies and various national professional associations have not been beneficial; that local communities need to be the centers for determining educational directions; that schools need to be more attuned to local interests. Further, there is a belief that rural communities have been seriously eroded socially, culturally and economically as a result of consolidations, which have moved control further away, mostly to the bureaucracies of state governments and the large social, cultural and economic entities of our urban centers.

When Ambassador Annenberg announced in December 1993 his gift of $500 million for the reform of the public schools, the expectation was that the focus would be on urban settings. Most of the early publicity given to the gift emphasized, for example, cities such as New York and Chicago.[2] Nonetheless, Barbara Cervone, with a vision of this work extending beyond large urban centers, invited in October 1994 a group of rural school educators/advocates to consider the possibilities of a

[1] For the most part, this paper is a set of observations, meant to contribute to an understanding of the Annenberg Rural Challenge as well as inform further the Rural Challenge Board. It draws primarily on critical documents from the archives of the Rural Challenge, current papers and interviews; however, some early interactions of Research/Evaluation team members with people in various Rural Challenge sites are also represented.

[2] This early publicity was an indication of how urban schools, their problems and occasional success stories have dominated the media.

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"Rural Challenge".[3] With an agenda that grew out of the ideas outlined above, and believing that a national school-community revitalization movement might now be possible, those brought together argued that Mr. Annenberg's best hopes were more likely to succeed in the rural schools-- that rural schools might, in fact, provide important leadership to the national reform of schools. To facilitate the work, Barbara hired Jonathan Sher to work with the group - - now considered a planning committee - - to put together a proposal. This was an important step, a reasonable assurance that support was likely.[4] While the Planning Committee conceptualized at the outset a national strategy, the early consensus of the planning group was that the Rural Challenge should be developed operationally around regional programs, given direction by established rural school leaders, serving as conveners, with regionally organized boards or steering committees.[5] For a variety of reasons, mostly related to concerns about the equity of resources and programs and a belief that the politics of regionalization was potentially too divisive, the Interim Management Group (made up of Paul Nachtigal, Jack Shelton, Elaine Salinas, Faith Dunne and Barbara Cervone) "over-turned" what had been a basic, though constrained consensus in favor of regional structures, presenting to the newly constituted Rural Challenge Board an outline for a National Project, with a National Director and National Board that would develop a grants program and put into place sets of activities designed to sustain over time a large rural education movement. The only thing left of the regionalization at this time was the idea of volunteers who, like the scouts that were organized later, would recommend prospective sites, even "championing worthy efforts" and help with networking activities. This structural decision was favorably received by the Annenberg Foundation and $50 million in matching funds were pledged, beginning in August

[3] The following rural school people were involved in the early discussions with the Annenberg Foundation: Jonathan Sher, Jack Shelton, Faith Dunne, Paul Nachtigal, Elaine Salinas, Joe Nathan , Jack Murrah Deborah Adams, Beverly Divers White, Carl Glickman, Joseph Martin, Gary McDonald, Paul Olson (Blandin Foundation), Martha Rich, Stewart Springfield and Don Struefert.. Their confidence about rural schools setting the national pace grew out of what they viewed as a consonance between rural schools at their best and the Annenberg Foundation's interests in small schools, personalization and curricula related to life beyond schools.

[4] In the Annenberg strategy, groups (mostly communities) were invited to enter the grants' process. There was no open invitation for proposals.

[5] This regional organizational structure for a Rural Challenge was a focus of discussion from the initial meeting of rural schools' advocates and the Annenberg Foundation to the June 1995 meeting of what was called the Interim Management Group, which later gave way to a National Board. It produced from the outset considerable controversy. Some of the following questions provide a characterization of the issues, ongoing debates. Should there be four regions (comprising all fifty states)? or six regions? or eight regions? Did any sort of regional configuration increase the likelihood of greater bureaucratization? Given the head start of the southeast and north central regions, would it make sense to start here, provide funding for several years and then move to other regions? Should applications for support come from states or local school districts? What should the role of a National Director and Steering Committee be? Should they be responsible for special populations? Should the National office serve primarily as a placeholder for Annenberg funds? Be the principal fund raising entity? The source for supporting networking activities?

1995.[6] The new Board, though, was left with the responsibility of explaining the shift.[7]

In light of the "matching funds" requirement, and with considerable encouragement from the Annenberg Foundation, the Rural Challenge began its life (and its grants programs) with commitments to a set of "Founding Partners" whose assets were used as an initial match for Annenberg Foundation funds.[8] While there was some debate about the efficacy of establishing funding ties to so many "Founding Partners," it needs noting that several members of the original planning committee believed the national prominence of some of the "Founding Partners" would contribute to making the initiative more credible.[9] As it has turned out, "Founding Partners" was likely an unfortunate descriptor as it seems to have conveyed to **some** of these Partners that they had a preeminent position in the Rural Challenge, that they should expect a significant share of the resources, looked to as primary centers of good practice and major resources for schools and communities wishing to emulate the large goals of the Rural Challenge.[10]

Among the "Founding Partners" are programs with long histories of work in

[6] The decision to alter the structural understandings did not please everyone who had worked on the development of the proposal to the Annenberg foundation. Paul Nachtigal, in describing the rationale for the decision, acknowledged "there will likely be some continuing questions and discontent in parts of the country [where regional organizations were begun based on earlier understandings]." In some respects, I may have overstated the decision, as some members of the Board understood that the idea of regions playing an important role was merely "put aside for now." It came up again at the February 3, 1996 meeting of the Board and the decision was made to "not specify regions at this time, rather have them emerge from the work," It has not come up since at a Board meeting. It should be noted, however, that regional groupings met at the Summer Rural Challenge Rendezvous (late June 1997) to discuss ways Rural Challenge sites within designated geographic areas might work together, sharing resources, providing support, and considering exchange visits. Assuming these regional entities actually develop some structural bonds, they will still be far different from the original conception developed by the Rural Challenge Planning Committee.

[7] From my review of the documents, and understanding well the differentials in resources that exist across regions, as well as the different histories of various organizations doing work in rural settings, it is hard to imagine another way for the Rural Challenge to have proceeded.

[8] As an observer of the start-up period, much might have been different had the Annenberg Foundation been willing to provide some beginning operational funds with the match coming at another point (though this wasn't the Foundation's strategy at the time). This would have enabled the leadership and national board to decide on how to deal with the well established organizations that became the "Founding Partners" at a later point, after the formal organizational structures were in place and a grants program more firmly established. This is a case in which the matching fund requirements made the Rural Challenge's work far more complicated.

[9] In fact, this was very likely the case. These nationally visible projects, especially Foxfire, the National Writing Project, Breadloaf, the Algebra Project and the League of Professional Schools, contributed to a positive review within the Annenberg Foundation which had little connection with and only limited understandings of rural schools.

[10] The "Founding Partners" have, in fact, received considerable financial support from the Rural Challenge Board. Of the commitments made, as of the Board meeting of May 1997, the "Founding Partners" have received well over 50% of the total. Nonetheless, several remain unhappy participants. At a special meeting of the Board (June 1997), a decision was made to stop using the language of "Founding Partners," using instead the designation "First-Round Grantees." This is not a decision all the former "Founding Partners" will find satisfactory.

schools and communities around school reform, school-community exchange, economic development and construction of social capacity among teachers, students, parents and community people. There are also programs with distinguished histories of work with individual teachers, the development of interesting and constructive school curricula and pedagogical approaches, and community organizing. The former appear, on the whole, to fit more easily into the current directions established by the Rural Challenge Board than the latter, though there is some concern among board members that the work of most of the "Founding Partners" comes **out** of a center, and is brought **to** schools and communities --but mostly to schools. The current commitments of the Rural Challenge Board seem to favor programs that grow out of communities, are locally driven, and are related to locally constructed and understood needs, interests and commitments. That tension exists between the Board and some of the "Founding Partners" is not surprising.[11]

The Rural Challenge board, as constituted by the initial Planning committee in conjunction with The Annenberg Foundation, met for the first time on June 20-21, 1995.[12] The initial board members, mostly rural school advocates and rural area theorists, some of whom had their base in universities, others in foundations and community based organizations, made an early commitment to make diversity a key factor when considering the growth of the Board. The additions to the board over the subsequent year were representative of that commitment. The board is presently comprised of members from different geographic regions of the country and is diverse racially and culturally. It now consists of thirteen members: in regard to geographic regions, three are from the northeast, five from the south and southeast, one from the Midwest, one from the Plains, two from the southwest and one from the northwest; regarding members of color, two are African American, two are Native American and one is Hispanic.

With considerable guidance from Paul Nachtigal and Toni Haas (who joined the Rural Challenge initially as Deputy Director and is now Co-Director), the Board developed within a very short time a grants program, contracted for a research and evaluation component, established a public policy program, organized scouts, and

[11] The "Founding Partners" reached the point in the spring of 1997 in which their refunding came under review. All "Founding Partners" who made application have received continuing funding, mostly at their current levels. It should be noted that applications for continuing funding have not come from Foxfire. While tensions currently exist, many of these "Founding Partners" have important contributions to make as resources to the various Rural Challenge sites. This role will be particularly critical to the long-term effort of building a national rural schools/communities movement.

[12] A process for the selection of a National Director was established at this meeting along with a set of selection criteria including the following: networking/coalition building skills; demonstrated experience in the change process; knowledgeable and valuing of rural cultures; committed to the rural challenge vision and goals; knowledgeable about schooling and its relationship to community. Five candidates were brought to the Board meeting of August 14-15, 1995 for final interviews and selection. Paul Nachtigal was selected by the Board and charged to work out criteria for the selection of scouts and to work out all the final agreements with the Annenberg Foundation. It should be noted that Jonathan Sher was given a commendation by the Board for his work over the year in getting the Rural Challenge up and running. He is called by many associated with the beginnings, the "Founding Father" of the Rural Challenge – the person who maintained a large vision of possibilities for the work. While others, I have been told, might have been willing to accept $10-20 million from Annenberg, Jonathan pushed for at least $50 million.

began to develop relationships with potential sites (beyond the "Founding Partners"). Much has clearly been accomplished. [13]

I have been present at almost all Board meetings from August 18, 1996 to the present, giving me a solid base for observing the Board's growth and development. I should be clear before commenting further that I have played a more active than passive role at these meetings. This was the case because the Board sought to bring me into its deliberations, especially in regard to social and philosophical issues related to rural schools and communities, in particular, and large educational matters, for purposes of context, more generally. I have participated in discussions about the Rural Challenge as a movement as well as those relating to practical operational concerns. Now that the directions of the evaluation/research plan are clear (the Rural Challenge board approved the plan formally at its meeting of February, 1997) and the Board's processes are becoming more stable, more highly organized, I will likely be at the board meetings more as a reporter of evaluation data than an active participant. [14]

Why have I so willingly been drawn into the board's ongoing work? Some explanation might be useful. First, I believe effective evaluation means being close to the related projects, to their fundamental debates, complexities, and successes.[15] Equally important, however, is the fact that I have an abiding interest in the educational and community issues being pursued in the Rural Challenge, in particular the local nature of schools and curricula, the need for parents and community people to be fully engaged in the life of schools, the power of smallness and a related personalization of instruction, the pursuit of social, cultural and economic growth at the local level and the importance of a democratic education. These have been central elements in my work over many years, many in rural environments.

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[13] The complexity of the Rural Challenge must be noted. Unlike the other Challenges, which are local, organized mostly around individual cities or metropolitan areas, the Rural Challenge is building relationships with schools and communities throughout the United States, with all the diversity that this implies. Staying in touch with, nurturing, challenging such a far-flung array of grantees is, indeed, extremely complicated. Adding to this complexity is the large goal of fostering a national schools/communities movement, the implication being that the Rural Challenge expects to have a life beyond Annenberg.

[14] At its meeting of May 1997, the Board decided to organize around a grants committee that would meet beyond formal Board meetings to make preliminary decisions about funding. The purpose was to give the process more time for serious consideration of proposals than has been available at regular Board meetings (where grants are one among many agenda items) and to use more time at Board meetings for issues relating to public policy, evaluation, and public engagement. The guidelines established by the Grants Committee at its meeting of June 8-9, 1997 are elaborate and appear to call into question much of the earlier process. Had they been fully in place at the outset, it is possible that many of the grants actually made would not have been made. A major shift relates to criteria and some reconfiguration of the Rural Challenge's goals. Overall, the shift reflects the Board's growing understandings of the work, its complications and possibilities.

[15] I see our Evaluation work as "developmental evaluation" (to use Michael Patton's formulation in Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods [Sage] 1997), an understanding that programs are never static, that they are always changing.

II

What are my observations of the Rural Challenge as it completes its second year? As an observer, there is much to be impressed by. An enormously ambitious, complicated program has been put into place. A stable Board, made up of thoughtful, very hardworking, serious minded individuals committed to the large purposes of the Rural Challenge, now exists; the National office, in Granby, Colorado, is fully operational and is carrying out its work effectively; [16] a grants program was developed, accompanied by a scouting process that helped in the nurturance and writing of proposals, and 24 grants were made;[17] a research and evaluation effort has begun; a public policy program has been initiated; a public engagement program is in formative stages;[18] a national fundraising strategy has begun;[19] reporting mechanisms for projects have been implemented; a new brochure, more current with the changing directions/understandings of the Board, has been drafted; a Rural Challenge reader – to include essays and descriptions of practices relating to the themes of the Rural Challenge – has been planned and should be available in the winter, 1997-98 (published by the Milkweed Press in Minneapolis). [20] These impressive accomplishments become all the more clear at Annenberg Cross-site gatherings as stories relating to the various Challenges are

[16] It should be noted that the National office has operated with a staff of four. It is very small for the complex tasks it is being asked to carry out. In large measure, the central staff is limited to this small size because of Annenberg restrictions; namely, that "no more than 10% of the budget can be expended for general and administrative costs."

[17] The current thinking is that 15-20 additional grants are likely to be made. The Annenberg Foundation's goal of getting the money out to schools relatively quickly is being met. (I will say more about this.)

[18] A Subcommittee was named by the Board at its May meeting to work with external consultants around a plan for public engagement. The intent here is to publicize the work of the Rural Challenge and its ideas/commitments as a foundation for the long term goal of creating and sustaining a national rural education movement. In relation to this effort, recruitment for a communications director (or coordinator of public engagement) has also begun. In addition, a Rural Challenge Website has been established (developed and maintained by students at the New Country School –a Rural Challenge site in Minnesota).

[19] An executive search firm has begun work with the National office to select a professional fundraiser for the longer-term work of the Rural Challenge, even beyond the Annenberg funding.

[20] Paul Nachtigal and Toni Haas are also producing for the National Center for Rural Education a book on Place Value. This work, which places rural communities within a larger historical perspective, should contribute greatly to the thinking of the various grantees. Many participants at the Summer Rendezvous seemed to take away some mixed messages about place. There were several views related to the students: they should "feel bad" if they leave their communities; they should have realistic choices; and it should be possible for graduates to return without a sense of failure. As Paul and Toni describe Place, it is far more than such views convey. It is closer to the formulation of "living well" where one lives now or wherever one settles in the future, creating a place that has meaning. It has much to do with values, dispositions and roots.

shared.[21]

In the process of implementation, the leadership of the Rural Challenge and its Board has come to think about the work differently. What characterizes the changing landscape? What is being learned? [22]

A good starting point might be the Granby meeting of the Board on August 18, 1996. I was asked to lead a Board conversation about the purposes of schools alongside the question of "whom should schools serve?" There were two purposes – an opportunity for Board members to think together, to hear each others' views, and also as an occasion for me to learn more about what mattered for Board members as a base for framing a theory of action to guide the Research/Evaluation work. [23] The dominant themes were – students should come to know their local communities well, see in the local circumstances a history of consequence and ongoing possibilities, understand that real choices exist in adulthood, that conserving, a sense of sustainability of resources, values and culture is important, that schools and communities need to be seen more as one, not as separate entities. There was also a strong belief expressed that the role of the school needs redefinition and creating this redefinition will demand enlarged community discussion. The understanding that parents and community people have lost considerable control of their schools was widespread. I outline below **some** of the actual statements made by Board members in order to portray more fully their power (they should be read with the stem schools should):

- Help students learn the values of the local culture, understand the place in which they live ...teach our children how to remain a viable species ... learn the laws of decency and connection.
- Be seen as one of many educating institutions in a community
- Help students have loyalty to themselves, to a culture, to a place as well as gain competence in creating different patterns of livelihood.
- Help children and young people engage more constructively with matters of race and culture, able to cross various boundaries.

[21] Several of the urban challenges have a longer history, others are more recent. In most cases the early urban challenges – New York and Chicago in particular –had strategies constructed around decentralized, autonomous small schools. They were riding the reform wave that favored the kinds of directions the Annenberg Challenge was supporting. The climate in the large urban centers has changed. There is a large push for recentralization, greater interest in what is being termed "standards driven reform" which appears in practice as standardization. Small schools, developing their own curricula, charting their own governance structures, developing their own accountability systems in relation to their parents and related communities, seem not to be as highly valued as they were just a few short years ago. Moreover, the networks that were created to meet the requirements of the Annenberg Challenge, were often unnatural and appear in many circumstances to be unproductive.

[22] This account is being written prior to the full analysis of data relating to the focus sites of the Research/evaluation program. But as noted at the outset, the intent is to share observations of the early work of the Rural Challenge.

[23] I will outline the theory of action that emerged, and was accepted by the board at its February 1997 meeting, as an appendix. The original framing went through several iterations based on the response and further interactions with Board members.

- Begin with a view that there is great strength in a local community – that people in a local community have the ability to make good decisions, can figure out what to do to make their schools better.
- Regain connections to those in the community who remember things..."what can the grandparents of our children do that our kids can't do? Bring them in to teach."
- Help students know that it is possible to live well in the local setting, that "bright" students can stay as well as go.
- Be connected to their communities, value community members, not be dominated by a view that "experts" who "know everything" must control the discourse and decision making. Be places that support mentoring, apprenticeships, active learning – the student -as -vessel notion doesn't work.

Additionally there was a belief that the Rural Challenge "should be revolutionary <u>but</u> historically linked, not unnecessarily polarizing or demoralizing." Beyond this set of formulations, Board members also addressed themselves to their best hopes for rural schools and communities because of the work of the Rural Challenge, outlining ideas that go beyond the usual patterns.[24] Once more, I provide <u>some</u> representative statements.

- There will be real efforts to see what works better ...new directions will be set.
- Intellectual work won't be in conflict with a local focus.
- Education of place is dominant ...these will be "value added" for an education that is rooted deeply in the community.
- Students and teachers will be hungry to know how to build connections to what exists in the local community.
- There will be a seamlessness, a blurring of lines between the school and the community, students and community members.
- Adults in the community who are not professional educators can talk about what is going on in the schools, as they will be knowledgeable about education.
- Students will be involved as researchers of community issues.
- Community people will join teachers in building curriculum, organizing the school – outside "experts" would not be so dominant.
- Interest in School Board elections would be high.
- There will be community internships, school walls full of local materials, ongoing discussions in the community about school matters.
- The school would be seen as a community resource, a reservoir of talent.
- Schools would be involved in community development, economic development.
- Instead of settings where students want to be something, they are something – researchers of the community, publishers, writers, computer consultants.

[24] As part of the Research and Evaluation Document, we have listed a set of outcome-related ideas that had their beginning at this meeting and were developed further at subsequent meetings. This statement will be presented as one of the appendices.

The ideas expressed are, in political-educational terms, progressive and democratic.[25] They suggest educational directions that go beyond typical practices. I came away impressed by Board members' articulateness about educational and community development issues as well as by the fairly radical nature of the ideas, wondering if the schools and communities receiving grants would be, in fact, in a similar place.[26]

I should note that one Board member offered a concern at this August 1996 conversation that the Rural Challenge's literature and related discourse, including that which I have outlined above, tended to "over glamorize" rural schools and communities. This person asked: "how many school board members or parents in rural settings are really ready for such a large progressive agenda?" Another suggested on another occasion, "we ought not romanticize as we do rural schools and communities and their possibilities." In neither case was there a rejection of the large goals; there was, however, a concern about what it will take to get to those goals.[27]

In relation to the foregoing, it seems clear that there <u>are</u> different views among Board members about what is most important. This was most evident at the February 1997 meeting of the Board, which began with a daylong "retreat," a review of the state of the Challenge – what was going well and less well, whether the definitions associated with the Rural Challenge's ideals were clear enough, what kinds of directions should guide the ongoing work. One of the tensions arose over

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[25] I was somewhat surprised, especially in light of the emphasis being given to distance learning and the related technologies, that technology was not mentioned by anyone in this four-hour discussion. Moreover, it has not been talked about much since then. It is almost as if technology is seen as a distancing factor in relation to the more vital community-school exchange that the Rural Challenge is trying to foster. This obviously doesn't mean that Board members are opposed to rural students having access to the latest technologies. It might mean, however, that the new technologies are <u>not</u> seen as answers for the revitalization of rural schools.

[26] As I started the process of reading the various proposals that had been solicited by the Rural Challenge, it seemed clear that there were some gaps. As we began interacting with schools as part of our Research/Evaluation work, it became evident that the language that dominates the literature of the Rural Challenge and is expressed by the National staff and many Board members is not, for the most part, the natural language of school administrators, teachers, and parents. We found ourselves often involved in Rural Challenge sites serving in the role of interpreters. What this suggests, in part, is the need for the Rural Challenge to enlarge contact with the schools and networks related to its various grants. Current plans call for the revision of the basic descriptive brochure, a newsletter which will highlight work that relates closely to the major goals/hopes of the Rural Challenge, and a new role for the scouts – eventually maintaining regular contact with Rural Challenge sites, serving as liaisons to the work of the National Office. Bringing everyone together in Granby in late June 1997 was the first real opportunity to celebrate the ideas and hopes of the Rural Challenge as well as share work. The expectations for this Rendezvous were high and were met to a large degree. (I will discuss this further in the closing section of this paper.)

[27] What has been evident over the year is the growing understanding that the large hopes need to be thought about as practices schools and communities <u>work toward</u>. The increased discourse at Board meetings about a National movement corresponds to that understanding. There has also been concern about having only 5 years to carry out the Annenberg work. It should be noted that the Board authorized Paul Nachtigal and Toni Haas to seek two more years from the Annenberg Foundation, which was granted. This will enable the Rural Challenge to slow down some aspects of its work, providing time to make its long term hopes more possible.

priorities – the community or the school? Among board members are individuals who have confidence that the schools need to be the focus of the Rural Challenge's work and others with little confidence in schools and more interest in matters of community development. Paul Nachitigal and Toni Haas continue to argue for both communities and schools.[28] Definitions also came under scrutiny – especially "genuinely good and genuinely rural schools."[29] Additionally, "Pedagogy of place" became a topic of discussion. "Place", that understanding of the local environment, tied closely to David Orr's work that has influenced greatly the Rural Challenge's philosophical stance,[30] fit well but "Pedagogy" seemed for many Board members too closely tied to "education-ese.

The other issue that received considerable attention revolved around communication between the National Office and grantees after the awarding of a grant. This lead to a list of steps to be taken once a grant was made (and discussion about the need for more staff help in the National Office). Overall, this was an important set of conversations for the Board, helping build a larger arena of shared understandings. This board and the Rural Challenge are clearly evolving as the large tasks of grant making, fund raising, policy development and Evaluation are proceeding.

III

In this section I bring forward additional thoughts about the Rural Challenge, its ongoing processes and dilemmas. I also raise several questions for continuing conversation.

One of the early, as well as ongoing, challenges facing the Rural Challenge has been finding "genuinely good and genuinely rural schools" (to use the early language), places working at the kinds of transformations the Rural Challenge had put forward as goals. The primary responsibility for locating and guiding sites in the application process fell to Rural Challenge **Scouts**, former teachers, community

[28] As long as there has been a good deal of money to grant to various invitees, it probably wasn't necessary to make a hard decision about the community-school matter. As there is less money to spend, this issue may become more contentious.

[29] This basic goal statement was re-framed as "genuinely good schools serving and served by rural communities." The following were identified as the qualities of such schools: they are in reciprocal relationships with their communities, recognizing their interdependence and their larger educational purposes; they are developing a pedagogy of place; and they are accepting responsibility to be bi-cultural institutions, allowing students to succeed in different environments, both rural and urban. It should be noted that "genuinely good and genuinely rural schools" was also described by some members of the original Rural Challenge Planning committee as "vague", "too general."

[30] Ecological Literacy: Education and the Transition to a Post-Modern World, Albany: State University of New York, 1992.

organizers/activists, community educators.[31] The Scouts went about their work in different ways. Some made extensive use of networks with which they had long associations; others sent letters to all schools under a particular size (under 400) providing information about the Rural Challenge, following up with small group meetings; others depended on leads given them by State Departments of Education, people in local colleges and universities and community organizations.[32] The Scouts found early on that many schools are doing some of what the Rural Challenge wants to encourage. Most teachers and administrators, in fact, resonate intellectually with the ideas embedded in the Rural Challenge's literature. Because the Scouts wanted settings that were far along in the process of change, especially in regard to school-community interactions, the process was considerably more complex than anticipated. After many miles of travel and many, many hours of active discussion with teachers, school administrators, parents and community people, the Scouts found settings they believed warranted support and provided assistance with proposals to the Rural Challenge Board.[33]

Did the Scouts make the best choices possible? Were the schools and communities as far along as they might have believed?[34] In retrospect, the Scouts, as well as members of the Board, suggest they might have done better had they waited a bit longer, sought sites with even more possibilities – but they were under great pressure to get sites into the grants' cycle. And they lacked clarity about what mattered most – schools or communities? settings far along but possibly less in need of the Rural Challenge's support? or settings wanting to move to another place but representing a risk?[35] There is now considerably more clarity. At the May 1997 meeting of the Board, The National Directors presented the grants process around a "map" of characteristics. The framing was: what does our grantee portfolio look like? Is there enough variety? Enough risk? Some of the defining elements were: risk, types of settings, racial/cultural circumstances, distinctive directions and

[31] The use of Scouts, appointed in March 1996 and tied to particular regions of the country, was clearly an experimental, though novel strategy. These Scouts were given rather limited direction, essentially the brochure along with some intensive orientation about the Rural Challenge's large purposes. Given the circumstances, and the novelty of the strategy, it couldn't have been much different. Several of the Scouts shared with me that they didn't want too much direction, though they would have welcomed greater clarity about what mattered the most. In many respects, the Scouts have been the primary voices/interpreters of the Rural Challenge in their regions of the country.

[32] By and large, the Scouts did not, in the end, find State Education Departments particularly helpful.

[33] How much help to provide to local communities proved complex. Most of the Scouts wanted to be helpful without creating any sense of dependency. This is a difficult balance to achieve.

[34] Several of the Scouts shared with me at the Summer Rendezvous (June 1997) that they were surprised that so many of the sites seemed to be struggling with the community side of the work. In effect, they were questioning whether the best choices had been made.

[35] The Scouts were generally critical of the original brochure for its vagueness about matters of community and place, believing that it was not easy to make translations to practice.

were: risk, types of settings, racial/cultural circumstances, distinctive directions and leadership. The general view was that more variety was needed and that risk factors should play out more heavily.

The Scouts met on three occasions in the initial months with Toni and Paul, essentially to discuss the large hopes of the Rural Challenge and to map out a strategy for "scouting" possible sites. They came together as a group with the Board for the first time in August 1996. It was after this particular gathering that scouting reports assumed a more common pattern and communication between the Scouts and the National Office became more regularized.[36]

As the Grants period is seen to be winding down and as concerns about ongoing communication with sites are increasing, the role of the scouts is undergoing transformation. Their new role, as **Stewards**, is now being developed. To be Stewards is to stay in-touch with the sites, being coaches, giving encouragement, possibly providing resources to support greater depth of practice, sharing of the work of others, and the like. This appears to be a natural transition and should prove helpful.[37]

As an effort that is "under construction," to use Paul Nachtigal's framing of the Rural Challenge, growing clarity around language is to be expected. That clarity, as noted, is emerging. In this regard, our work around the formulation of a Research/Evaluation proposal provided another occasion for the Board to think about the language associated with the Rural Challenge. An example might be illuminating. When we restated in our Research/Evaluation Plan the four goals of the Rural Challenge, as they had been stated in the Rural Challenge's basic literature, the Board's Evaluation Committee, with feedback from other Board members, asked that we reorder (as well as reframe) the goals, to begin with "a powerful and sustainable rural school movement that actively involves families, communities and the broader public, as well as educational professionals." The Board Evaluation Committee also suggested that we highlight more the community. In this regard, members liked our definition of "community-school integration" better than "school-community exchange."[38]

Several months later, the Grants Committee of the Board presented, at a special June (1997) Board meeting, another definition of "genuinely good rural schools," different than the one developed earlier and which we had incorporated into our Research/ Evaluation Plan. It is clearly an attempt to bridge the school-

[36] What was clear from Board discussions over the subsequent year was that more was being expected of the Scouts. Their reports, for example, were scrutinized more carefully, many more questions were raised.

[37] The Scouts met together for a day at the Summer Rendezvous to discuss their new stewardship role. There appears to be genuine support for this enlarged responsibility. It is, nonetheless, a difficult role, one in which the pressures around dependency are large. It is also a role that assumes that the Stewards will have ongoing access to assistance around resources.

[38] The Rural Challenge Brochure, what most grantees saw and likely followed, tilts more in the direction of schools than communities. The Annenberg Challenge Program, as a whole, is also more about schools than communities. Yet, by this time, one year and a half into the work, the Board was rethinking goals, reshaping the language.

community matter. It states: "By 'good rural schools' we mean public institutions serving and served by their communities – working together on academic excellence and developmental appropriateness; working together on developing the capacity to live well sustainably; acting on the belief that every person contributes to our shared future, and struggling with equity issues [a clause that needs more work], and connecting to local natural and cultural resources. When we discuss 'community,' we address such dimensions as social structure, cultural heritage, the ecological environment, and other phenomena."[39]

Does the language matter? I think so.[40] Given the fact that the community issues are the most complicated, primarily because there is less experience here, it would seem that this is the place for the Rural Challenge to exert special attention. Descriptions of best hopes in practice and the many ways of getting these might be useful.

As the Board streamlines more its grants procedures, it is beginning to ask many new questions. Thus far, the grants have tended to be quite large. Should they have been smaller? Should a larger number of smaller grants be made in the future? At the May (1997) Board Meeting, costs received considerably more scrutiny, with several board members asking why sites needed "so much money."[41]

One question that emerges here is sustainability. My experience in small rural settings is that grants that distort local economies tend to become impossible to sustain. Now much of what the Rural Challenge is about is a set of ideas – a means of rethinking the ways schools function within communities, setting forth a different set of curriculum agendas. The ideas and related practices that are being promoted within the Rural Challenge should be sustainable over time without an ongoing, longstanding infusion of new dollars. But this suggests that the ideas and practices get fully embedded.[42]

The Summer Rural Challenge Rendezvous in Granby (June 1997), an activity stimulated to a large degree by the interests of the Research/Evaluation Team, was

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[39] This definition begins with a fairly traditional school focus and then moves outward. The previous definition included more of the language of reciprocity. Some integration might be useful. I suspect that the language will continue to undergo transformation as the Rural Challenge leadership and Board learns from the actual practices that emerge in the various Rural Challenge communities.

[40] I am reminded here of a statement made by Carlos Fuentes, Mexican historian, novelist and diplomat: "We say justice, we say development, we say democracy. Words won't bring them, but without the words, they will never exist". (Christian Science Monitor, Sept. 28, 1986, p.16).

[41] This doesn't mean, however, that the philosophical question of larger versus smaller grants was debated. It likely needs to be discussed especially as the Rural Challenge moves toward its goal of a National Rural Education/Community Movement. I think here of many federal programs that put several hundred thousand dollars into small settings (with 2-3 year funding) and found that the programs ended as the federal support ended. In effect, the grants were too large for the local communities to sustain on their own.

[42] This is an argument for expending just enough dollars to enable people in local settings to embed a different set of values into their schools and communities. What does this take? A close examination of one or two sites thought to be far along might provide some basis for thinking more about this.

an occasion to bring together participants from all the funded sites as well as those in various planning stages to share their work, understandings, hopes and dilemmas. In so many ways, The Rendezvous, with over 300 participants, far exceeded expectations. Paul Nachtigal closed the meeting by suggesting that "The Rural Challenge is something different today than it was three day ago." I suspect he was right in this assessment.

What was different? Many participants understood for the first time that they were part of a much larger, inspirational activity.[43] The Gallery, in many respects a kind of portfolio of student and community work, seemed particularly generative. People learned from one another, seeing in the work of others possibilities for themselves. The idea of place, especially in curricular terms, assumed enlarged meaning and it seemed clear that work in communities contributed to students producing high quality work, what was defined by many as "genuine work." Those from schools who saw their community-based work as "six week special units" began to talk about ways of making that work much more central. And some community people began to see even more possibilities for contributing to young people in their local settings.[44] Nonetheless, to contemplate a fully integrated community in which schools are one of many centers for education and a curriculum of place is central to the work of students across subject matters appears difficult to imagine. There is very little experience here. It was not surprising that much of what participants described was fairly conventional school-community exchange. In part, this is the case because of long histories in which schools have been quite separate from life in their communities, filling their days with relatively standardized instructional programs, and those in communities have come to understand that is what schools are about, the way "they are supposed to be."

In many settings, governance has moved to county seats. Moreover, state governments and state educational agencies have become increasingly more powerful, defining more of what is taught and how the schools should be organized. This seems to affect more the secondary schools than the elementary schools. There has been, especially over the past three decades, considerable distancing of parents and community members from the intellectual life of the schools. That the Rural Challenge is in effect a challenge to the distancing, a movement aimed at altering the educational landscape in rural communities, at helping local communities understand and use the schools as part of an effort at revitalization and sustainability, became more clear to participants by the end of the Rendezvous. But

[43] The Rural Challenge sites, though parts of local networks, are quite isolated. While they are breaking some new ground with their increased efforts to help children and young people understand more fully their local settings and to make large connections between schools and communities, many see themselves as very much alone, feeling their way, not sure they can sustain the work. They saw clearly at the Rendezvous that they were not alone.

[44] The notion of students as community resources, persons able to make an important contribution to the vitality of a community was a particularly important learning.

the roadmap for getting there was not so apparent.[45] It may be that opportunities needed to exist for some of the sites that are quite far along to share their work more fully.[46]

The students who attended the Rendezvous made large contributions. They were energetic, excited about their work as community historians, musicologists, scientists, biographers, artists. They liked being integrally connected to The Rural Challenge work in their various communities. They appreciated meeting one another, across Rural Challenge sites. And they went home with an enlarged view of what is possible, able to share another vision of how schools and communities can be more highly integrated.[47]

The Rendezvous provided, importantly, an excellent opportunity for networking, among communities with similar characteristics, and goals, and among communities within particular regions of the country. The exchanges of postal addresses, e-mail addresses and telephone numbers was constant. My sense is that people went away from the Rendezvous with enthusiasm for the work of The Rural Challenge. A beginning basis for a rural schools/communities movement was certainly begun. Next steps need now to be thought about.

IV

The ideas that are basic to the Rural Challenge are inspiring. They have long been put forward as directions for good schools – not just in rural communities but increasingly in urban settings as well. When Paul Nachtigal and Toni Haas write about the philosophical base of the Rural Challenge, they point to John Dewey and his support for active learning, connecting the work of schools to the community, making the community and the work that people do in communities central to the curriculum, the need for collaborative exchange, active citizenship, the importance

[45] There was certainly an understanding that getting students into the communities, making connections to local resources, finding ways of involving more adults in the community as mentors and teachers, using students as resources for community projects, as participants in genuine work, and the like, was good. But how to get there was, for most participants, an unanswered question. And the barriers – longstanding expectations, time, various regulations, state curriculum standards and tests, community beliefs to mention some – were described by many participants as large.

[46] The work at Howard, South Dakota and Akula Elitnaurvic, Alaska might be examples. In both cases, those involved are clear about the need for a philosophical base; the community-school integration is embedded in active beliefs, carefully articulated. The work is not a project.

[47] I was personally impressed by the rootedness of the students. They had strong connections to their settings, could describe their places well. The question asked by many of the adults was: how representative were the students? That question was asked directly of the twelve students who held an "open space" session to discuss student issues related to schools and communities. While they didn't want to talk about themselves in relation to their classmates, they acknowledged they were among students "who took their education seriously, wanting to do well." These students liked the local focus that permeated many of the conversations but they also doubted that such a focus and the related community aspects could easily be carried out. They saw their settings as "fairly conservative," rather traditional about educational matters.

of intergenerational relationships and democracy. They don't point out, however, how difficult that Deweyan vision has been to put into practice on a large scale.[48]

Schools seem to be able to work up units that are strongly connected to their local communities but coming to a full, yearlong curriculum around the local base seems particularly daunting. That work around place is going on everywhere within Rural Challenge sites must be seen as encouraging. But what will cause schools and communities to see as well as implement larger possibilities? And what will enable parents and community people to feel even more empowered in relation to the schools – in the Southeast governed at the county level and in most states becoming more heavily regulated by state bureaucracies?

The Rural Challenge has made a splendid beginning. Some 250 schools and communities across the country have embraced the Rural Challenge's challenge for the reinvention and revitalization of schools and communities. That number will enlarge greatly over the next year. What was mostly a set of ideas and very large hopes in June of 1995 has become one of the most promising of the Annenberg Challenges, an effort that is generating enthusiasm in increasing numbers of small communities across the country. While not the first rural education reform movement, it is well on its way to making a significant difference in the ways schools and communities carry out their work.

[48] Dewey's larger vision found its way into many schools, rural and urban, in the post World War I period. But those settings were always relatively small in number. Currently, in the public sector, the Central Park East Schools and the Urban Academy in New York City and a host of schools attached to the Coalition of Essential Schools come closest to that large Deweyan formulation.

Appendix C
The Background and Context of the Annenberg Rural Challenge Research and Evaluation Project

Project Director: Vito Perrone
Research and Evaluation Team : Julie Canniff, Mary Casey, Carla Fontaine, Evangeline Harris Stefanakis, Ben Williams, Douglas Wood.
Research Associates: Scott Christian, Candace Cochrane, Dick Landry, Robert Leier, Dennis Shirley, Lauren Sosniak, Connie Titone.

The Annenberg Rural Challenge

The Rural Challenge focuses on school reform for rural students, their schools and communities across the country. Its goal is sustainable reform that encourages and supports genuinely good, genuinely rural schools serving and served by their communities. To achieve this goal, its work is organized in four programs: grants, policy, public engagement, and evaluation.

The Annenberg Rural Challenge Research and Evaluation Project

The Annenberg Rural Challenge Research and Evaluation Project at Harvard Graduate School of Education is designed to document the progress of the Rural Challenge. Currently, it is focusing its study on the interaction of communities and schools. It is a four year longitudinal evaluation which will provide formative and summative information about the Annenberg Rural Challenge for several different audiences. In its design, it draws upon multiple perspectives - - linking researchers, practitioners and community members.

This evaluation will document what is being done in the Rural Challenge, in its related networks, schools, and programs while assessing whether the goals of the Rural Challenge are being achieved. It will, more importantly, provide explanations for documented activities in communities and their schools through the stories of rural people and their learning environments, believing that these stories provide vital information for the larger school reform effort.

The Annenberg Rural Challenge Research and Evaluation Team

The Annenberg Rural Challenge Research and Evaluation Team, in collaboration with field research associates, focuses on documenting the efforts and progress of the Annenberg Rural Challenge.

A Context for Research and Evaluation

Overall Goals of the Annenberg Challenge Projects

The goals of the Annenberg Rural Challenge are tied closely to the primary, interdependent, mutually reinforcing goals of all of the Annenberg Challenge projects which are to:

- create small, more intimate learning communities;
- reorganize time for teaching, teachers collaborative work, and student learning;
- reduce the isolation for individuals within schools, between schools and between schools and their communities;
- enhance student learning and development.

The Goals of the Annenberg Rural Challenge are to support and create:

1) a powerful and sustainable rural school movement that actively involves families, communities and the broader public, as well as educational professionals;

2) the greatest number and widest distribution of genuinely good rural schools in reciprocal relationships with their communities and their local environments;

3) political, policy and public environments that will enable rural schools to survive and thrive; and

4) an effective combination of documentation and evaluation methods to ensure rich and reliable ways of knowing what has succeeded, what has not, and why.

Project Design Areas of Study, Goals, and Data Collection Formats

The framework of this evaluation is designed to learn about five areas of the Annenberg Rural Challenge that influence rural schooling: (1) Student Learning; (2) the Schooling Process; (3) Community-School Integration; (4) Network/Project Activities; and (5) Policy Development.

Data collection formats include; observations, interviews, classroom and school/community portfolios, surveys, and document analysis. Research and Evaluation over the four years of the Project will document the work of a selected sample of project sites. The selected sites will be those deemed most representative of sites supported by the Annenberg Rural Challenge. We will sample 10-12 networks from the 1996-98 cycles of implementation grant recipients.

Annenberg Rural Challenge Research and Evaluation Sites

In our first year of research, we have included the following eight project sites in our sample.

Pacer's Small Schools Cooperative, AL

Pacers represents 29 schools reflecting the economic, cultural, racial and geographic diversity of rural Alabama. Their philosophy of education is based on three themes: Genius of Place; Sustaining Communities, and Joy.

School-at-the-Center, NE

This project sets up institutes in target communities which bring school and community people together to combine ideas for community-based education and economic and housing development.

The Selborne Project, PA & NY

In this project, students focus on developing respect and responsibility towards the local environment by developing the curriculum around the square kilometer in which the school and its building are located.

Breaking New Ground in Appalachian Education, KY & VA

This project is regionally organized, working within Virginia and Kentucky. It is focused on the ability of schools and communities to break new ground together and assist each other in a cooperative way in their common tasks.

Tillamook County Education Consortium, OR

This project will focus on Children, Families and Community in the areas of technology, academics and character education.

Alaska Native Rural Challenge, AK

This project proposes to initiate major curricular changes within Native American Communities located in Alaska. The aim is to reorient schools around local concerns including sense of place, indigenous economic systems, language and tribal histories.

Texas Interfaith Education Fund, TX

Texas Interfaith is committed to developing social capital, teaching people in the community to learn how to work with each other to build "robust" relationships, to invest in one another and in broad-based organizations.

Program for Rural School and Community Renewal, SD

Formed around the revitalization and development of democratic principles of participation and responsibility, this project aims to "retrieve the burden of community well-being from outside sources and into the day to day life of the rural school."

Appendix D
Defining Community and School Exchange

Creating working definitions is a step in developing a reciprocal conversation between community and school people so that both can speak the same language. The Rural Challenge Research and Evaluation Team has learned that clarifying language and ideas is an initial entry point for understanding the relationship between communities and their schools. This clarification was a necessary first step in building community dialogue.

Working Definitions:

Community
Community relates to a group of people living in a particular geographic location who, together, create a sustaining way of life which draws on the strengths and diversity of its members, the resources of the ecological environment that surrounds them, the educational resources within their reach, and the political, moral and spiritual values they name as their own. Community, in this sense, does not imply that homogeneity is a dominant feature.

Schooling
Schooling refers to the institution of 'school' which most often has a formalized structure: buildings, classroom(s), normative curriculum, performance and assessment standards, professional teachers, professional administrators, and some form of external funding. Schooling is mandatory for young people, ages 6 to 16, and typically includes five years of elementary school, three years of middle-school and four years of high school. Students are expected to demonstrate competence in such content areas as reading, literature, social studies, science and mathematics, and are often evaluated by some form of standardized test.

Student Learning in the Context of Schooling
In the context of the Rural Challenge, student learning is more than typical measures of achievement on standardized tests. Students learn about the flora and fauna, the ecological state, the people, the economic conditions, the relationships with other geographic and political entities, the possibilities and limitations, the various cultural strengths and values of their local environment. Values matter -- hard work, equity, social justice, stewardship, family. Academic learning matters for what it enables students to do in the world and for the personal enrichment it can provide.

Appendix E
Survey Responses

Our Research and Evaluation Plan includes annual surveys of middle and secondary school students, teachers, and parents in our Focus Sites, and every - other - year surveys in all Rural Challenge sites. In the spring of 1997, surveys were completed in seven of our eight focus sites.

We present below, in keeping with the central theme of this Annual Report, survey results related to Community School Exchange -- essentially around questions which addressed parent and community interactions with the school, the community as a base for what students study in school and make use of beyond school, and how the community is thought about and understood. (The responses come from 82 parents, 101 teachers, 295 high school students and 335 middle school students.)

Some general observations can be made:

* The community is moderately used as a basis for curriculum in the schools;
* Students are not deeply involved in community-based activities;
* Parents are comfortable interacting with teachers, are welcome in the schools;
* Parents do not believe they have a large ability to influence state policies related to their schools; though they feel they have some ability to influence local policies related to their schools;
* Students, teachers and parents value greatly the local community, seeing important assets to be present;
* Students, teachers and parents are positive about the overall quality of education in their local settings;
* There is limited confidence among secondary school students and their parents about the local setting providing jobs and a future;
* There is considerable stability among teachers, students, and parents in their respective communities.

Student Responses (1-5 Scale)	High School	Middle School
How often do your parents and/or guardians visit your school or talk with your teachers about your progress in school?	2.62	2.70
How often do teachers teach about activities in the community or current events going on where you live (e.g., assigning projects related to your community)?	2.81	2. 41
How often do you discuss the following with your parents or other adults living with you?		
topics you've studied in class	3.11	3.48
community news and information	3.06	2.74
This year how often have you...		
participated in ...groups outside of school (like 4-H clubs, scouts, church groups)?	2.99	3.41
had community people invited into your classroom?	2.37	2.74
worked with members of your community (community service learning projects)?	2.38	2.63
This school gives a great deal of attention to the local community?	3.23	3.40
Parents are always welcome in this school?	4.42	4.80
In class, we talk a lot about what makes this town such a special place in which to live and learn?	2.64	2.54
Our school tries to instill a sense of community pride in its students through class lessons on local history and our cultural heritage?	2.99	2.88
A valuable aspect of our town is ...		
the neighborhoods	3.79	4.02
the playgrounds or town recreation	3.43	3.42

the landscape/environment	3.87	4.35
our cultural activities	3.46	3.79
the churches/religious institutions	3.73	4.12
our own traditions	3.68	4.16
This town is a safe place to live.	3.98	4.06
I like living here because you know just about everybody and just about everybody knows you.	3.63	3.90
To me, living here is somewhat like being part of one big family.	3.14	3.40
Even if I had the chance to move to a new town or a new school I would still prefer to stay here.	3.08	4.04
I don't see much of a connection between what I am learning in school and the town where I live.	3.13	2.73
I will be able to support myself and my family in the community where I am living now if I choose to stay here when I finish school.	3.28	----
I have learned a lot about the history and culture of our state and local community in my classes.	3.28	----
FAMILY-LIVED IN THE COMMUNITY? (2=since I was born and 3=10-20 years)	2.21	2.29

Teacher Responses

How often do you have discussions with parents about the conditions, progress of education in the community?	3.32
How often do you invite people from the community into the classroom to present to, share experiences with the students?	2.94
In class, we talk a lot about what makes this town such a special place in which to live and learn.	3.06
Our school tries to instill a sense of community pride in the students through class lessons on local history and	3.15

our cultural heritage.

As a teacher /school leader, I feel it is my duty to provide students with information about future career opportunities both within and outside the community in which they live.	4.31
I feel I was able to integrate broad curricular issues when teaching about local area concerns.	3.74
There was a significant difference in student involvement that I observed while working on a curriculum of place as compared to other curriculum presented.	3.38
My students developed a healthier attitude towards their locale through working on teaching and learning about their place.	3.80
Even if I had the chance to move to a new town or a new school I would prefer to stay here.	3.82
This school has made efforts to contribute to economic development in our local community.	3.57
Important requirements for high school graduation include:	
thorough knowledge of the history, ecology and sociology of the local community	3.76
academic and vocational apprenticeships in the local community	3.67
LIVED IN THIS COMMUNITY? (2=1-4 years , 3= 5-10 years, 4 =10-20 years)	2.75
TAUGHT IN THIS COMMUNITY? (2=1-4 year, 3=5-10 years, 3=more than 10 years)	3.10

Parent Responses

I feel comfortable discussing my child's educational progress or program with his or her teacher or school administrator.	4.45
How often do your child's teachers teach about community activities or current events going on where you live (e.g., assigning projects relating to your community)?	3.28

This year, how often has your child participated in an extracurricular activity that involved working outside of school with his or her community ...?	3.20
How often are community people invited into your child's classroom?	3.41
My child's school plays an active role in community economic development.	3.48
As a parent, I talk frequently with school personnel about the progress of education in this community.	3.84
A valuable aspect of our town is ...	
the neighborhoods	3.88
the playgrounds or town recreation	3.22
the landscape/environment	3.92
our cultural activities	3.27
the churches/religious institutions	4.01
our own traditions	3.93
If there were changes needed in state policies ...I feel I can influence ...changes.	3.02
If there were changes needed in the district or school policies...I feel I can influence ...changes.	3.55
To me, living here is somewhat like being part of one big family.	3.63
This town is a safe place to live.	3.96
This town is a specially good place to raise children.	4.02
Even if I had the chance to move to a new town I would prefer to stay here.	3.92
My child learns about as much in school about this local community as he or she does about other parts of the state and nation.	3.43

My child's school has made efforts to contribute to economic development in our local community.	3.58
My child will be able to receive a good education and a job that he or she enjoys in our hometown.	2.91
Overall, I think my child's schooling will provide the skills and knowledge needed to work anywhere, doing anything ....wants to do.	3.83
LIVED IN THE COMMUNITY (2=since I was born, 3=10-20 years , 4=less than 10 years)	2.51

Meet the Research and Evaluation Team

Harvard Graduate School of Education

February 1997

- Initiating the documentation of communities and schools

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